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OUT OF NAZARETH



# OUT OF NAZARETH

BY

MINOT J. SAVAGE

“CAN ANY GOOD THING COME OUT OF NAZARETH?  
COME AND SEE”

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# I

## JESUS' PROCLAMATION OF THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD



# OUT OF NAZARETH

## I

### THE COMING KINGDOM

JESUS was about thirty years of age when, according to the custom of his people, he made his first public appearance. He had gone out to the Jordan and accepted at the hands of John the rite of baptism, thus indorsing the work of one whom he afterwards declared to be not less than the greatest of all the old-time prophets. After John was put to death, by the order of Herod, Jesus takes up his work, and re-echoes his proclamation, "The kingdom of God is at hand; the kingdom is coming, it is near. Prepare for it, repent, and be ready."

It is worth our while to note just here, at the outset, that there have always been in the world two different classes of minds, people with diametrically opposite ways of looking at human society. There are to-day,

there have been in every country and every age, people who see all the good things in the past. All the finest and best things used to be; they are not now. The world is going wrong, is on the down grade; and we are to expect only a worse and worse condition of affairs.

There is another class of minds made up of those who look forward and upward, who believe in the integrity of things, and that the better time is before us. We can find illustrations of this, if we seek for them, in many different directions. I note only two.

In Greece and Rome there were those who believed that the golden age existed at the beginning of human history, since which time things had gone from bad to worse. There were also those who believed that men began in the very poorest and most abject state, and who looked forward to a finer and better outcome in the future.

We find these same two classes among the Hebrews. There were those who placed Paradise, the Garden of Eden, the perfect condition of things, at the beginning. Men fell from that ideal state; and the world was growing worse and worse. Then there were those — and among them were all the proph-

ets — who were looking forward. They say nothing about any ideal condition of things at the beginning. They are dreaming of a coming kingdom of God, a perfected condition to be attained.

It is worthy of careful note — for it has a most profound bearing on the theological problems of the world — that Jesus himself was one of these forward-lookers. He believed that the kingdom of God was coming, not that it had been and we were fallen away from it.

I think it is very remarkable, in view of the fact that for fifteen hundred years it has been the predominant teaching of that section of the Church which calls itself orthodox that Jesus came to save men from the result of the fall, — it is a remarkable thing that Jesus himself did not appear to know anything about it. So far as any recorded word of his is concerned, he had never heard of the Garden of Eden or of the existence of Adam.

I do not mean by this, of course, that we are to suppose that he was ignorant of these stories; but is it not a little strange that he takes no note of them, that he never mentions Paradise, never speaks of Adam

or Eve or the serpent or the temptation or the fall, or of being cast out of Eden? If, as the Church has taught for fifteen hundred years, he came into the world expressly to deliver men from the results of the fall, it seems to me most extraordinary that he should have never even alluded to it in the most distant possible way.

Jesus, then, looked forward, and placed the kingdom of God before us as something to hope for, as a goal to be attained. But now, when he issued this proclamation, simply saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand," how would he be understood by the average hearer at that time in Palestine? Unless he explained himself, — and there is no record that he did in any definite way, — it was inevitable that his hearers should suppose that he was predicting the immediate coming of the kind of kingdom for which they at the time were looking.

And what was this? As the Jews fell into an inferior position politically, came under the control of their conquerors, they looked back inevitably, and glorified the time when they were free, when they had a royal line of their own, when they had a kingdom in which they could take pride.

So their ideal of all things political came to be the reign of their poet-warrior David; and they believed — this idea sprang up in a way which will be indicated later — that, when they had fulfilled the conditions, when the time was ripe, when they had won the favor of God, this kingdom of David would be restored. Some great man was to appear, one born after the lineage of David, born in his city, Bethlehem, who was to restore the ancient glories. They were to be delivered from their enemies; they were to be free not only, but they were to become the rulers of all the earth. All tribes and kindreds and languages and peoples were to be subjected to their sway.

This was not that they might terrorize them by a despotism, but that they might spread over the world the blessings of the truth which they believed God had put into their keeping. In other words, there was to be the establishment of a theocracy, a veritable kingdom of God, with Jerusalem for its capital, with the Jews as its special citizens and ideal representatives; and this was to be the means of blessing all the people of the world.

This was what the Jews expected. They

believed that it was to come by a sudden and miraculous interposition of God, when, as has been said, they had complied with the conditions. And this was the reason why the Pharisees, who were the great patriotic party of the time, emphasized so the minutest and most careful observance of every particular of the law. They believed that, when all the people could perfectly keep the law, God would appear and the kingdom of heaven would be made manifest.

Now how did this idea grow up? If we think of it as existing only among the Jews, it is very strange, and seems to need an explanation; but the explanation is perfectly simple. If we go back far enough, we shall find a time when the Jews believed, as did all the other people of the world, in many gods. They did not doubt the existence of the gods of Moab or Philistia or Babylon or Egypt. They believed, however, that Jehovah was their God, and that they owed allegiance only to him. Just as, for example, a citizen of Germany to-day may not doubt the existence of the Czar or the King of England, but he owes his allegiance to the Kaiser, so, with every Jew, Jehovah was the one God to whom he owed obedience.



But after a time, through natural processes of growth, they came to believe not only that their God was the greatest, a King above all the gods, but that he was the only God, the God of all the earth; that others were only names, idols, figments of the imagination. Still he was their God, and they were the one people out of all the nations of the earth that he had chosen. He had made them the recipients of at least a partial revelation; he had given to them his truth; he had taught them his law; and they were thus a sacred people.

Now it may be seen how naturally it would follow,—if they were the special recipients of God's favor, were his chosen people, that he must bless them, that he must make them mighty, must give them supremacy over all peoples. It was the necessary, logical inference from the fact that he had chosen them. He had selected them for some great, wise purpose; and if for a time they were in subjection to foreigners, were humiliated, cast down, it must be because they were going through a process of training and preparation; they were being taught the necessity of perfect obedience to his law; and, when they had learned the

lesson, when the time had come, when the days were fulfilled, then he would appear, would vindicate their claim to be his special favorites and chosen people, and would give them supremacy over all mankind.

It is easy to see, then, how naturally, necessarily, logically, their belief in the coming of a Messiah grew out of the fact that they supposed themselves to be the elected, chosen people of God.

But we are to note — as indicating that this is not a strange and isolated fact — that other people besides the Jews have expected a similar coming of divinely appointed agents to intervene for their deliverance. If we go to the Far East, to ancient India, we may note that there was a periodic reappearance of messengers of the Divine. When affairs became unbearably bad, when some great final crisis was reached, then a new deliverer came, some one to teach, to intervene, to save, and start the people on the right path again.

Gautama was not the first of the Buddhas ; there had been a long line preceding him. He was only the last and the greatest of them all. And to find a similar belief we do not need to go to the Far East. Such

ideas were in existence here among the people that inhabited this country when Columbus discovered America. Cortés was able to effect his landing on the coast of Mexico and to advance into the interior. Why? Because the Mexicans were waiting for the coming of a Divine Being, one who was to interpose and deliver the people—the White God; and, when Cortés came with his ships that were so wonderful to them, with their white wings flying apparently over the sea, and when he was able to thunder with his guns, they easily mistook him for the God they were expecting.

We are all familiar with the story of “Hiawatha.” When he disappears, sailing in his boat down the broad line of the sunset, it is not for a final departure. He is to come again.

Also in the legend of King Arthur you find a similar idea: he is asleep for a time, hidden in a peaceful valley; but he is to return and deliver and bless his people.

So out of similar ideas we find similar hopes and expectations growing in different parts of the world.

Thus the Jews were looking for the coming of a Messiah. We know from outside

history, as well as from the New-Testament records, that the people were on tiptoe of expectation. A man had only to proclaim himself the Messiah, and the thoughtless crowd was ready to follow after him. Half a dozen different men appeared about that same time, and had crowds thronging about them, just as had Jesus.

Indeed, it is worthy of notice, in passing, that some of the best New-Testament critics and students, some of the greatest scholars of the world, have not believed that Jesus himself claimed to be the Messiah at all. Dr. Martineau, for example, one of the greatest scholars and thinkers of the last century, teaches us that it is his belief that this idea is a part of the mythology that sprang up around the name of Jesus after his death; that the claim is put upon his lips; that he himself never made it.

The people, at any rate, were expecting a Messiah. But when Jesus proclaimed the immediate coming of the kingdom of God, that did not necessarily mean that he claimed to be the Messiah; but it made the people look this way and that, wondering. They came to him, and said, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for an-

other?" This, then, was what the Jews were looking for.

It is important now to raise another question — as to what Jesus teaches in regard to the coming of this kingdom. The popular idea at the present time — and this has been true for hundreds of years — has been either that Jesus was not to come again in any miraculous way at all, or else that it was to be in the very far future, at the time of the day of judgment and the end of the world.

Others have put off this perfect condition of human affairs to the next life. This has been the general belief; perhaps it is the general belief to-day. Practically, most people have given up looking for the kingdom of God here among men. Now and then there are Second Adventists, or persons of one name or another, who teach it; but most people listen to them with a smile. They are incredulous. They think that these persons have gone mad over their studies of the prophets. In other words, to-day it is not a vital belief.

What did Jesus teach about it? We must admit right here that it is not quite easy for us to determine. In one place Jesus is represented as saying, "The king-

dom of God cometh not with observation." You are not to say, "Lo, here," or "Lo, there;" and, if men come and report to you that a Messiah has appeared or that the signs of the kingdom are visible, you are not to follow; for, he adds, "the kingdom of God is within you."

This has been regarded by many as one of the very profoundest spiritual utterances of Jesus. The kingdom of God is within; and it must work its way out through the thought and the feeling of individuals until it gradually reorganizes human society and purifies and lifts up human life.

This passage can equally well be translated, "The kingdom of God is among you;" and there is no way of determining precisely which of these Jesus meant. If it is "among you," then he utters a similar truth. It is already begun, it is here, it is in the thought and the feelings and the lives of the true and the noble already; and you are not to look for it as an outward political appearance.

And yet, right in the immediate connection, Jesus makes this apparently irreconcilable statement: "As the lightning appears in one part of heaven and shines to the other

part of heaven," — certainly, an outward, sudden, visible appearance, — "so is to be the coming of the Son of man." And he warns them to watch. As the people in the time of Noah were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, were absorbed in their every-day occupations and did not notice the signs of the times till the flood came and swept them all away, so, he says, it will be in this generation; for it is to come like a thief in the night.

Then, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, if he is correctly reported, he teaches the sudden, immediate, miraculous coming. He asserts that it is to be within twenty or twenty-five years of the time when he was speaking, — that is, he says, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

If we are to be governed in our judgment by the weight and number of texts, the overwhelming majority is in favor of Jesus' belief that the coming of the kingdom of God was to be sudden, was to be immediate, during that generation, that it was to bring to an end the then present order of affairs and establish ideal conditions among men.

I shall not attempt to decide this ques-

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tion; for, while I would like to believe that Jesus held modern ideas, ideas which have been forced upon us by the experience of the last two thousand years, by the growth of philosophy, by the experiments of science, —while I would like to believe this, the matter does not trouble me. Jesus' greatness I find in the moral and spiritual realms; and it does not disturb me at all in my estimate of him to find that he shared certain mistaken ideas of his people. I shall not, then, attempt to decide between these two theories. It is not a matter, to my mind, of first-class importance.

I pass now to another point, which is one of first-class importance; and here I find that Jesus sunk his plummet down to the very deeps, and that his words reached to the heights of heaven, and that in their broad inclusiveness they take in the world. Jesus believed in a coming kingdom of God. He believed that it was at hand.

Who were to be its citizens? This is the great crucial point, on which we need to be perfectly clear. Certain sections of the Church have said: "Only those who come on our terms into our communion are members or citizens of the kingdom of God. Only



they can have any part in the eternal life that awaits the children of God."

Jesus said nothing about any such conditions. Jesus established no church, he said nothing whatever of membership in any church.

There are other churches which have said, "You must accept a certain belief before you can be a citizen of the kingdom of God." Jesus said nothing whatever about any such condition. There is one passage in the Bible, which may be in the minds of some, which needs to be cleared out of the way. In the last half of the last chapter of Mark are the words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." These words are put on the lips of Jesus. But every scholar knows that the last half of the last chapter of Mark is no part of the Gospel. It is a later, ecclesiastical addition, and of no authority. There is no reason for supposing that Jesus ever spoke these words.

There is another section of the Church that says, "You must be baptized after a special fashion before you can be a citizen of the kingdom." Jesus says nothing about any such condition.

The Athanasian Creed says you must believe every word of that creed, including the metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity, before you can be a citizen of the kingdom of God. Jesus says nothing about any such condition.

In other words, there is not a single one of the dogmatic or ritualistic conditions of membership in the kingdom of God which has been defined and insisted upon by one branch of the Church or another that has one slightest particle of authority in any unquestioned word of Jesus.

Who is a citizen of the kingdom of God? Read the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, — that great judgment scene, — where Jesus describes the good as separated from the evil, one on the right hand, and the other on the left in that marvellous allegorical scene. Who are those on the right hand? Not church-members; not believers; not people who had partaken of the sacrament; not those who had been baptized. He says nothing whatever of any of these things.

They are simply the good, the merciful, the loving, the pitying, the helpful, the true. He who fed a person who was hungry; he who clothed somebody who was naked; he

who visited some one in prison; he who comforted somebody in sorrow; he who gave a cup of cold water to one who was thirsty, — he, in other words, who possessed the divine spirit of love, tenderness, sympathy, pity, help, — these found the doors of the kingdom of heaven open.

For in the very nature of things, if you will see, these are the ones who have the kingdom of God already in their hearts, and are living it out in their lives; and the one who is with God, and has God in his soul, and is living God's life cannot be shut out from any heaven in this world or any other world; for heaven is a part of his very soul, is of the essence of his nature and being. That is the profound teaching of Jesus.

There were those at the time who thought that only the children of Abraham could be admitted to this kingdom. John tells them not to pride themselves on that, and goes so far in his figurative speech as to say, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And in another place Jesus says, — the thought is quoted, — "On that day shall come men and women from north and south, from east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the king-

dom of God ; and you who pride yourselves that by inheritance and ritual and ceremony you are Jews will be shut out."

In other words, unless a person first gets the kingdom of God into his soul, God himself cannot get him into his kingdom. It is a contradiction in terms. There is no possibility in this world or any other of any one's being in the kingdom of God except as the kingdom of God is first in him ; and, if the kingdom of God is in him, then there is no way by which any power in the universe can keep him out of the kingdom. There is no hell for a man who carries heaven in his own soul ; and there is no heaven for a man who carries hell in his own soul. This is profound, eternal, universal, spiritual truth.

Where does Jesus say that the kingdom is to be? Not in some far-off future, — here and now ; it is at hand. The kingdom of God is something which is to be here, on this poor old curse-ridden, tear-stained earth. The dreamer of the Apocalypse has the kingdom descend like a beautiful city from God out of heaven ; but it comes down and rests on the earth.

Now how much of this great dream of Jesus can we accept as consistent with human

experience and our scientific knowledge of the history of the world and the growth of human society?

In the first place, we can accept with our whole souls the proclamation of Jesus that the kingdom of God is at hand. It is always at hand for any one who believes in it and wishes to enter it. It is to be here, on this old world of ours.

Now science justifies entirely the teaching of Jesus that the kingdom of God here on this earth is a practical thing. The perfectibility of human nature, in spite of the fact that it is so far from perfect to-day, is one of the teachings of science. Science, like Jesus, does not place Paradise at the beginning. We started in the jungle; we are advancing towards Paradise, not away from it.

And there is not one single evil that afflicts mankind to-day which is a necessity, — not one. Disease can be eliminated. We have made wonderful progress in this direction during the last few years. Those who find all the good things in the past, who believe that men used to live for hundreds of years, and that the period of human life is decreasing, are simply mistaken. There never was a period in the

history of the world when the average length of life was anything like what it is to-day.

Vice is no necessary part of human life. Crime is not a necessity. There is no evil of any kind that needs to be. Industrial problems are soluble. Social questions can be answered. Thus we may reasonably trust in the coming of an actual kingdom of God right here on earth and in the midst of present conditions.

What do we need for it? We need simply what Jesus taught, guided by all attainable knowledge—nothing else; and there is no possibility of our attaining it in any other way. Jesus laid down the principle that, if we wish the kingdom of God to come, we must aim at perfection. "Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." What does that mean? It means simply that we must keep God's law; that is all.

In the physical realm perfect obedience to God's laws means perfect health. In the mental realm perfect obedience to God's law means the attainment of the truth. In the moral realm it means goodness, justice, order, and peace. In the spiritual realm, perfect relationship of the soul with the Father.

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In other words, what we need, in order that the kingdom of God may come, is to know God's laws, and obey them; and, just as fast and as far as we do that, just so fast and so far will the kingdom come.

We need now to emphasize one or two points already touched on. We need to know the laws of God. It is sometimes said that Unitarians lay too much stress on the intellectual side of things. I am sometimes told that I ask people to think too much, that I ought to dwell more on the emotional, the feeling side of human life. But if this world is ever to take any practical steps towards the coming of the kingdom of God, the very first condition is that men shall think, shall study, shall try to find the way. The world has been wandering, stumbling, falling, in wildernesses and morasses, for thousands of years because it has been too much moved by feeling, because it has not been willing to take the trouble to think, because it has not been at the pains to know, to find out the truth, the way.

How can I obey a law if I do not know anything about it? There is only one way; and that is obedience to God's laws. His

kingdom can come in no other way, and it will come in that way; and, if we are to obey the laws, we must first know them. We must know the truth, Jesus tells us; and the truth will make us free, — but we must know it.

Just as fast, then, as the world is willing to find out what the conditions are, and just as fast as the world is willing to comply with those conditions, just so fast will be the coming of the kingdom of God.



## II

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL



## II

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

JESUS appeared with the proclamation on his lips, "The kingdom of God is at hand." That meant, of course, that the kingdom of God was not already here. And again, of course, that meant that pain, sickness, wrong, and death were here.

There is a widespread, popular feeling at the present time against theoretic discussion. People say, in effect, "Yes, evil is here, sin, wrong, pain, disease, death. But why stop to discuss their origin, their nature? Let us join in making an end of them. Let us rather engage in the practical work of improving the world."

I should be decidedly in favor of that course if I believed the matter so simple. But when we start in to improve the world, to save men from sin and evil, what do we find people saying? One great branch of the Church says, "You must submit to my authority, you must become a member of

my communion, you must join in my rites, you must partake of my sacraments. If you do not, there is no hope for you, no hope for the world."

Another branch of the Church says, "You must accept my creed." Another says, "You must be baptized according to my method. Another says, "You must be spiritually wrought upon in a special way by the Holy Spirit before you can become a child of God."

Then there are the great ethical-culture societies, which tell us that all this theological dogmatism is purely a matter of speculation; that we can know nothing about God or human destiny; and that the only practical thing for us is to teach and obey the moral law. I will not enter into the discussion of this latter point, beyond suggesting that very many persons question any permanent validity in any moral law which exists in a universe in which there is no God and no future life.

There are still others who say: "The great, pressing evils of the world are pain and disease and poverty. We shall well perform our part if we can do something towards diminishing these." So they urge us to

join with them in the practical work of philanthropy.

You see how difficult it is to get people to unite in ridding the world of its evils until they have some common idea as to what those evils are and as to how they are to be overcome. In others words, there is no getting along in this world without theorizing.

Suppose a physician should say, "Let us not stop to discuss as to what is the matter with the patient; let us go to work and cure him." But how will you cure him until you have some clear thinking as to the difficulty? When the great Brooklyn bridge was swung in air, who did it? Was it the workmen, those who day by day carried out somebody's plan? or was it not primarily the man who did the thinking, the man who told the practical workmen what to do, and how?

There is not the simplest action of our lives that does not imply a theory, somebody's theory, — if not the workman's, then one that he has borrowed, consciously or unconsciously.

So there must be, on the part of reasonable beings who wish to solve great problems, some attention paid to thinking out the

nature of the difficulties that need to be overcome. Is it not, then, most practical work for us to consider for a little this problem of evil that fronts us on every hand?

When organized life, some hundreds of thousands of years ago, first crossed the border between animal and human, and man, as man, came to consciousness of himself and his surroundings, what did he find? He found himself ignorant and weak, in the presence of tremendous forces which he did not understand and which he did not know how to control. Some of these forces in their play hurt him. He necessarily thought of them as evil. Some of them appeared friendly and helped him. Of necessity he thought of them as good.

We must also remember—it is difficult, I know, for us to put ourselves in his place—that he thought of these varying forces that we call natural powers to-day as alive. They were beings similar to himself. One of the grandest generalizations of the modern world is what we call the “correlation of forces,” the discovery that all the different forces of nature around us are only varieties and manifestations of one force. But primitive man could not know that. So the

power in the running stream, in the winds, in the ocean, in the sun, in the lightning, — these were persons, — persons invisible, but in a certain way like himself. And, of course, this resulted in what we call polytheism; and you will see how inevitably it led to a division of these supposed gods into good gods and bad gods, or, at any rate, into gods that were friendly and those that were hostile.

This was the primitive man's method of explaining the evil of the world, — pain, disease, death. These were all inflicted upon him by some invisible power or powers, that for one reason or another did not like him and wished to injure him. The early man had no idea whatever of natural death. When a man died they always asked, "Who killed him, and why?" This was man's first explanation of the origin and nature of evil.

Let us now note a few of the steps which were taken in the religious development of the Hebrew people. We need to do this because they are in the line of our evolution, and their development leads up to Christianity and the position which we occupy to-day.

The early Hebrews shared with their pagan neighbors their polytheistic ideas; and their explanation of good and evil was as naïve and simple as that of the worshippers of Dagon or of any other of the idols of their age. But by and by they came to a belief in one God; and still evil remained, and had to be explained. Was it the work of this one God, their God, the one who had selected and chosen them and set them apart as his peculiar people among all the nations of the earth?

Yes, at first they frankly took this ground. There is a passage in the first Isaiah in which the writer makes God say that he is the author of both light and darkness, of good and evil. But by and by they took another step. They could not understand how a good being could be the author of evil. So they imagined that there must be an adversary, an evil being of tremendous power, who was interfering with the good plans of the good Father in heaven.

The fully developed idea of Satan as the tempter of man and the author of his fall did not originate with the Hebrew people. They borrowed it during the time of their captivity from those who held them in



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bondage. They brought it home, however ; and in their later life it became incorporated in their thought as the explanation of the origin of sin and sorrow.

The Hebrew people, however, always believed that God rewarded people for being good by health, by long life, by prosperity in business, by honor among one's people. There is no clear conception in the Old Testament of any idea of a dividing line between goodness as its own reward, as being rewarded by goodness, and goodness as being rewarded by material prosperity.

Believing as they did, then, that, when a man suffered, it meant that he had been doing wrong, that when a man lost his wife or children or became disgraced in any fashion, it was because he was guilty of some sin, they at last came to front a problem like that which was dealt with so wonderfully by the author of the Book of Job. The one great problem of that magnificent poem, one of the greatest poems of the world, is as to how it could be possible that a good man should suffer. They refused any longer, some of the clearer thinkers among them, to believe that a man was necessarily a sinner because he was sick in

body or because he lost his money or because his friends had died : and so Job is represented as being a perfect and upright man, and yet as suffering every evil that flesh is heir to. And God is represented as coming to the defence of Job against the popular opinion of the time, and declaring that he was true and upright in spite of the fact that he was suffering.

And yet the book ends very lamely. There is no clear conclusion as to why the good man must suffer ; and the poet illogically finishes his poem by giving back to Job again duplicates of all the things that he had lost.

Among the Jews another step was taken. They came not only to recognize the existence of physical evil, but of moral evil as well. This grew out of the fact that at last they came to think of their God as a holy God, as a God who loved righteousness and who sought righteousness on the part of those who would be his worshippers. So there was developed among them what we, in our modern phrase, are accustomed to call the "sense of sin ;" not simply a knowledge of the existence of evil, but a sense of personal unworthiness.

One of the writers speaks of having been fairly content with himself until at last he sees God as he is, and so is humiliated and ashamed. This, you see, is a new note in the development of the idea of evil.

The majority of the Jews, then, did not get beyond the thought that physical evil was the result of some wrong on the part of somebody; that, if a man suffered, it was because God was angry with him, or because he had permitted the Evil One for some mysterious purpose to work this injury, or because God, as a loving Father, — this, you see, is another step still, — was chastening and training him, preparing him for some higher and nobler life.

One characteristic of this Hebrew thought we need to have clearly in our mind, because it played so large a part in the history of the later world; and that is the fact, as I have already intimated, that they borrowed the idea that the universe was made perfect and fair at the start, but that it was invaded by a malign power from without, a power hostile to God and hostile to men because they were the work of God.

When we come to the time of Jesus, we are struck with what seems to me remark-

able, — that he nowhere attempts any explanation of the origin of evil. He apparently does not accept the popular belief of his time. He says nothing anywhere about the serpent or the Garden of Eden or the fall of man or of Adam as being cast out of Paradise. He denies explicitly, if he be correctly reported, in one or two places, the connection which the popular mind established between suffering and disease and the anger of God.

You remember the blind man was brought to him, and the bystanders said, "Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" It never occurred to them that anybody could be born blind except as the result of somebody's sin. Jesus frankly tells them that this is not the correct explanation. It was due to the sin of neither the man nor his parents. And then he cites another instance. He says: "Those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them; think ye they were sinners above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." He denies explicitly the popular idea that a man was necessarily a sinner because he was suffering.

We will now pass to the attitude that has

been taken by Christian theology for the last eighteen hundred years. I speak in general terms, in this way, because the common attitude in regard to this matter has been substantially the same throughout the Christian centuries.

Very unfortunately, as I think, the early Church accepted a bit of pagan legend which had crept into the Jewish annals in regard to the Eden story and the fall of man. The Church accepted this, and made it a part of what it claimed to be an infallible revelation. It became, therefore, what? The very corner-stone of the theology of Christendom. For eighteen hundred years all theological systems have started with this supposed fact, have had this in mind, have taken shape from it. They have accepted this as the explanation of the origin of all evil.

The Church has said — according to this old pagan story — the earth itself was cursed because of Adam's sin; the plants and the shrubs, the growing things of the world, are not what they would have been; there were no poisonous, noisome, thorn-bearing growths before; so the physical universe was cursed by it. They said, It is on account of this that man has suffered pain; it is on account

of this that he has been conscious of sin ; it is on account of this that all the diseases of the world have come into existence ; it is on account of this that men die.

This has been the consistent, universal, age-long teaching of the Church almost throughout its entire history ; and there is no Church to-day called orthodox that has in any explicit terms repudiated this legendary basis of its theological scheme. There are thousands of ministers who do not believe it, but who evade its logical results.

Because of this, then, because the devil tempted Adam, and Adam fell, all the evil of the world has come to exist. Sometimes, as among our Puritan ancestors, when some popular calamity occurred, it was attributed to the devil, whom God for some mysterious reason permitted to rule human affairs "as the prince of the power of the air." But, of course, according to the principle of common law, what God permits he is himself responsible for. All evil, then, all pain, all sickness, all sorrow, all death, has come into the world because the first man sinned. This has been the consistent teaching of the Church.

We will now turn sharply away and con-

sider the teaching of modern science concerning this problem of evil. Has it any light to offer us? For there is no light that can be accepted by scholarly and intelligent people in any of the other theories. Has modern science anything to say to us?

To be perfectly clear in our thinking, we need to know just what we mean by "science." We do not mean purely physical science. What is science? Science is nothing but the organized, systematized knowledge of the world. Science, then, as dealing with this matter, takes account of all human experience that is accessible. It takes account of all facts, all its discoveries in the realm of nature as well as in the realm of man and of mind. What, then, has science to say about it?

(In the first place science removes at one stroke the corner-stone of the theology of Christendom.) It demonstrates beyond all question — all intelligent question — that there (never has been any fall of man.) Instead of man's starting in perfection and falling away from it, we know — not guess — (we know that he started away down on the borders of the jungle,) and that every step from that day to this has on the whole

been a step upward and forward. Not that there have been no retrograde movements on the part of the race, but that, on the whole, there has been advance, and that there never was any such thing as a fall of man.

Notice a few other counts in this statement. Science has demonstrated that poisonous and thorn-bearing plants — what men of the early world regarded as evil growths — were not the result of human sin, because they were in existence before man appeared on the planet. Science, again, has demonstrated that pain was not the result of human sin, because pain was in existence on the planet before man appeared. It has demonstrated, again, that death is not the result of human sin, because death was here thousands of years before man came.

I remember one of my theological professors years ago attempting to evade the force of these tremendous facts by saying that God permitted pain and evil to exist before man came because he knew he was coming and would sin when he got here. But reasonable people will hardly be satisfied by an explanation of that sort to-day.



## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL 41

What now does science have to say as to the nature of pain and disease, of moral evil and death? Remember, I am using the word "science" in this larger and more comprehensive sense. In the first place, it tells us that pain is an absolute necessity on the part of beings capable of feeling. A being that can feel, can, in the nature of things, feel things that are disagreeable as well as those that are agreeable. If he could not feel one, he could not feel the other. A nervous system, then, that is capable of feeling makes the existence of pain, at least as a possibility, absolutely essential.

Note the next step. Science has demonstrated this also: that sentient life could not have existed on the planet but for the existence of pain. If beings could put themselves in the way of all sorts of forces and experiences that hurt and injure and crush, and not feel it, they would be wiped out of existence in a year. It is only because sentient creatures learn to avoid the things and forces which hurt and destroy that they continue to exist. Beings organized as we are, then, could not possibly live but for the possibility of pain.

Another step: science demonstrates be-

yond question that all necessary pain — that is, all the pain that needs to exist — is beneficial. It is a token, not of God's anger at all, but of his love and his tender care. Perhaps nine-tenths of the things from which people suffer are not necessary at all.

The pains, the heart-aches, the estrangements, the angers, the sorrows that we bring upon ourselves, and that we do not need to bring upon ourselves, — these God is not responsible for; and we have no right to accuse the universe as evil on account of their existence. Do not cry out unto God, do not find fault with him. Go and get rid of them yourselves; and then you will be face to face with the fact that there will not be one single pain left that does not speak clearly of the love and tender mercy of God.

What of death? Is death an evil? That depends. I do not believe that immortal life here on this planet would be a blessing, would be a good thing, unless all conceivable conditions of life here could be changed. It would be not only an impossibility, but a source of evil and sorrow, unless we could change the whole scheme and plan of things. That is too large a theme to enter upon

now ; but think about it, if you are disposed to believe that death is necessarily an evil.

Socrates, talking with his disciples more than two thousand years ago, declared frankly that, in his opinion, death was not an evil ; for, he said, "if it is a sleep, at the worst it will be only like a single night." If, when I close my eyes, I do not wake again, I shall not know it ; and there will be no consciousness of wrong done me. But Socrates added,— I quote, of course, only his thought,— "If death be the journey to another place, and if there all we think of as the dead are, what good, O my friends, could be greater than this? What would not a man give if he might be permitted to meet with the great, the famous, the noble of the early world, talk with them, ask them questions? What would not a man give if he might be permitted to walk beside those with whom he trod his life path here,—if he might look into the eyes of those he loved, clasp their hands again, and feel that thereafter there was to be no separation?"

If death is the gate-opener, and, after our training in this primary school, simply releases us and makes us citizens of the universe, then, instead of being an evil, it is

the crowning grace of the Father ; and none of us, whatever our opinions, is wise enough to know that it is not that.

In other words, we are not the possessors of sufficient knowledge to entitle us to say that death is an evil. The most we can say on the negative side is that we do not know whether it is or not. So death no longer remains as a clear count against the goodness of God. Science teaches us all this.

Now what of the sense of sin, as that word is ordinarily used? I hold ideas which differ, I suppose, from those commonly accepted in regard to sin. When I was a boy, and in my course at the divinity school, I was taught to think of sin as a purposed and conscious rebellion against an infinitely good and wise and loving God. That kind of sin I believe to be utterly absurd and impossible.

No man not insane would pit himself against the Almighty as a matter of power. No man not insane would question the right of the All-wise to direct him. No man not insane would refuse to love the All-loving. That definition of sin, then, seems to me absurd in the nature of things.

This does not deny or ignore any of the

wrongs or depravities of the world. It is only a question of their origin, their interpretation, and their cure.

When man waked up to the consciousness of moral imperfection, what did it mean? Was it a step down? No. It was a step up. The world before man appeared was not an immoral world; it was an unmoral world. Man waked up weak, ignorant, in the midst of this universe; and the problem set before him was to learn how to live. And he began by experience to learn that lesson.

He has what no other being has, an ideal, — an ideal of beauty, of truth, of goodness, of love; and he thrones that ideal as his conception of God in the universe, and he feels bound by it. He recognizes that as the righteous law of his being; and when he departs from it, if he believe that God really is, and that he is all that, he says simply, "Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

When he thinks of himself he looks at that ideal and is ashamed, because he has come short of being a man, of his possibilities in the way of goodness and beauty and truth; and he strives anew after their attainment.

The fact, then, that there is a consciousness of evil and imperfection in man is the most hopeful fact in human life. It means that man is growing, that he looks forward and upward to the unattained, and that day by day and night after night and week after week and month after month and year after year he says, as the apostle did, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark," — seeking to realize the high calling of God.

There is nothing, then, — if you will revert for a moment to what was said about Jesus, — there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus that commits him to any ideas of sin or evil or sorrow or death which are discredited by the advance of modern knowledge. So we are at perfect liberty to combine his high, deep, broad, spiritual principles and teachings with the results of modern science, and so find a natural, human, divine, hopeful explanation of pain, of sickness, of wrong, of death.

### III

## JESUS' CURE FOR EVIL





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WE have considered the problem of evil. We have asked, and tried to suggest an answer to, the question as to the origin and nature of the pains and sorrows which afflict mankind. We are next to consider how Jesus proposes to get rid of these evils.

All the religions of the world have sprung out of the fact that evils exist. They have been man's various attempts to get rid of these evils. In the early world, people thought just as wisely as they could concerning the nature of the universe around them and the powers in whose hands, for good or evil, they supposed themselves to be.

They could not help being polytheists. They could not help believing that there were large numbers of unseen beings around them, (who were capable either of hurting them or of helping them.) They interpreted the experiences of human life from this point of view. If a man was sick, or if he

was suffering, or if he was thwarted in any of his wishes ; if he failed in any undertaking, whether it was the hunt or a warlike expedition ; if he fell into the hands of his enemy, — his one remedy was to find some one of these unseen powers that was ready to help him. If he suffered, one of these gods was angry with him ; but, possibly, his anger might be appeased if he could only find out how to do it.

There were gods that he looked upon as generally hostile. They were enemies of his family or his tribe ; they lived and worked in the interest of some other family or tribe ; but still they were open to considerations ; their favor might be purchased, or at any rate he might buy off their active hostility. The gods that loved him would sometimes get angry with him ; but this anger might somehow be turned away.

All the early religions are to be interpreted in the light of these ideas. In other words, men were engaged in a sort of commercial transaction with these unseen powers. They were thought of as very like human beings, like the rulers of visible, earthly tribes. They were hungry, and wanted food. They were thirsty, and needed drink.

They were liable to get angry, if they were neglected or if their services were not properly attended to. They loved praise. They were open to all sorts of considerations which would appeal to an earthly chief.

How little the Hebrews are beyond this point when their history opens, you may read in the early chapters of Genesis. Jehovah himself, after the flood, is represented as being very much pleased with the smell of the burning flesh which is offered him in sacrifice, and on account of it is shown to make certain promises as to his future relations with the people.

Of course, among the pagan religions we do find here and there the higher ethical ideas. Among the philosophical and moral writings of the Greeks and the Romans are some of the noblest teachings to be found anywhere in the history of the world. But all the old popular religions were practically given over to sacrifice, to ritual, to ceremonial of one kind or another, and this for the purpose of influencing the gods and trying to buy off their enmity or in some way gain their favor. In other words, all these old religions were attempts on the part of man to get into favorable relations with the gods.

Now, when we come to the Hebrew religion, is there any abrupt transition? No, we find substantially the same ideas at work. Nearly the entire history of the Hebrew religion — all of it, so far as its external life is concerned — is a history of rite or ceremony, of sacrifice, of attempts in this way to please Jehovah, to do what he is supposed to require. The entire service of the temple was of this sort. At certain periods of the year the altars ran blood; the great business of the priesthood was that of sacrifice, — sacrifice of this or that or another thing, in order to win the favor of God, to ward off his wrath, to buy forgiveness of sin.

Now and then, on the part of some of their deeper, higher, more spiritual thinkers, we find another note. Let us look at one or two specimens. In the fiftieth Psalm the unknown author says, or represents God as saying: "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry," — you see that idea was not yet outgrown, — "I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the

blood of goats? Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High."

It is worth while to turn our attention to one or two other very remarkable utterances in this same direction. In the first chapter of Isaiah we read: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me. The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with."

And then a remarkable word from one of the later prophets, Micah: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression," — they were not far enough away from human sacrifice

to forget it, — “the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

In the midst, then, of this matter of sacrifice and rite and ceremonial and offerings, in the attempt to please God and turn away his anger and so be rid of the burdensome evils of the world, there break in these higher, more spiritual voices that point to a deeper-source of evil, and to another method of being rid of its blight.

But, in spite of this word of psalmist and prophet, we must remember that in all ages of the world — and it is as true to-day as it was in Jerusalem and Judea — the formalists, the priestly class, are always in the majority; the prophets are few. They are the leaders of a higher life; and they point to a brighter day. But the majority are always the ritualists and the ceremonialists, those who care for forms, and to keep up the rites unbroken and undisturbed.

Thus when we come up to the time of Jesus, the Jews practically had paid little attention to the psalmist and the words of

the prophet. Religion, when Jesus appeared, was a widespread net-work of ceremonial, vexatious, wearisome, touching every act of life and every hour of every day. Something must be done, always, in order to keep the law, in order to please God.

What attitude did Jesus take towards this? He swept it away with a breath. What is the teaching of Jesus? Listen to him while he talks with the woman of Samaria at the well: "Neither in this mountain, Gerizim, nor in the temple on Mount Moriah at Jerusalem, are ye to worship the Father. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

He does not indeed forbid sacrifice or form. In that wonderful saying of his, as reported in Matthew, he says definitely, If you bring your gift to the altar — what? He does not say, Take it away again. You can bring your gift if you wish; but if you remember, when you get there, that you are out of right relation to your brother-man, then you simply cannot offer it with the expectation that God will accept. Go away and get into right relation with your fellows; then you can come, and find a way open to God. That is his teaching.

And if there is any time when his words blaze as with anger, it is when he attacks this ritualistic, ceremonial side of religion that has become a substitute for the deep things of the heart and the practical things of the life. He says, "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites." He calls them blind guides; and why? He says, "You tithe the mint and the anise and the cumin;" you are very particular about all the formalities of the external law; "but you neglect the weightier matters,—justice, mercy, and faith." And in one place he scores a man—for what? He says: Your father and mother are in need; and what do you do? You take your property and set it apart, consecrate it as a gift to God, and then make that an excuse for neglecting the care of your father and mother.

This is the same idea which the writer of the First Epistle to Timothy has in mind, when he says, If a man does not take care of his kindred, those near to and dependent upon him, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Jesus, then, sweeps all this away; and he says all law and the prophets lead up to and find their meaning in what? "Thou shalt



love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." If you do that, then no matter about the rest. Further, he asks — in effect — Whatever you wish in this world, in any department of human thought or life, how are you going to attain it? I think it is the profoundest thought, the profoundest utterance, perhaps, to be found in any scripture of the world. It is: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Here, then, in this word is Jesus' cure for evil. The world up to his time had, so far as its established religions were concerned, been devoting itself almost entirely to external forms, — creeds, rituals, sacrifices, ceremonies. And it is curious to note that, even with those who to-day worship Jesus as God, this profound teaching of his seems to be but little understood and less practised. The Christian Church, in the main, and almost throughout its entire history, has put at the front the things which Jesus relegated to the rear. It is still sacraments, it is obedience to ecclesiastical authority, it is ceremonial, it is ritual, it is form, it is organization, — it is some of these external

things. It is something other than the heart and the life.

I do not mean that these churches do not preach anything about the heart and the life. They do; but what I mean is this: that the impression made upon the great majority of the followers of Christianity still is that these outside things are so important that they have done the things which are most necessary when they have carefully observed the external forms. And men are forgiven, priests are forgiven, ecclesiastics are forgiven, when they break the inner law, the real, essential conditions of the kingdom of God, so long as they are faithful to the external affairs; and no amount of love or character or personal service can give them standing in the ecclesiastical organizations if they disregard these external matters.

It is still true, then, that the Church has only partially learned the lesson which Jesus so emphatically taught.

We are ready now to consider the teaching of Jesus as to getting rid of the evil of the world. Note with me as to whether it is practical. Jesus has sometimes been criticised because he did not teach science, be-

cause he said nothing about sanitary laws in their relation to sickness, because he did not lay any special emphasis on the pursuit of intellectual truth. You will see, as you think of it, that he did none of these things. But he did a deeper, finer thing, — a thing which, practically understood and carried out, includes all these. For what is the realm of science?

It is nothing more than the truth of the kingdom of God as manifested in the material side of the universe. And what is the study of sanitary laws as related to disease? It is only, again, a search for the conditions for the establishment of the kingdom of God in the matters to which they pertain.

If, then, a man really loves God with all his heart, if he seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, do you not see that — if understood — it will lead to a love and a reverence and a loving search for all truth in every department of the universe? Because this is finding the presence and recognizing the laws of God who is first in the heart of the seeker after truth. There is not an evil on the face of the earth that will not disappear before the practical application of this teaching of Jesus.

Let us note now some particulars. We have already classified in a certain way the world's evils. Let us recur to this classification, in order that one or two other things may be added.

We have seen that a certain amount of pain is necessary, that it probably never can be eliminated from human life, — the possibility, at any rate, cannot be. Now all this necessary pain is a mark of beneficence, an indication of God's tender love and care. When therefore you set that one side, — the necessary pain of the world, — all the rest would cease to exist in a generation if men only followed Jesus' method for the cure of evil.

What are these pains? They are the ones that spring from carelessness, from ignorance, from selfishness, from passion, from anger, from hate, — from those things which are antagonistic to the spirit of Jesus; and all these could be eliminated from human life, and would be eliminated, if men only sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and if they loved God first, and with all the heart and the mind and the soul and the strength, and if they loved their neighbors as themselves.

Jesus' method, then, would do away with all the needless pain of the world. Is there any other method that has ever been devised that is likely to produce any such practical result? I do not know of one; I have never heard of one. Every step towards the elimination of pain means simply a step towards a knowledge of the laws of God and obedience to those laws; and that means seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Of course, it goes without saying, in the next place, that moral evil would be done away if we only followed the method and teaching of Jesus; because everything that is contrary to the law of God, to loving God and serving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves,—all these things make up what we mean by moral evil.

Follow out this suggestion for a little and see how very practical it is. Let us indicate some of the things that would be done away in human life if only this teaching of Jesus were practically accepted.

There is a great deal of poverty in the world; and this poverty is the source of suffering. There are people in New York to-day who are hungry, who are cold, who

are suffering from lack of clothing and a fire, who have no proper shelter. Does the teaching of Jesus have anything to do with that? All the poverty of the world that is of any practical importance would be wiped out of existence in twenty-five years if everybody would simply begin to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, to love God and to love their fellow-men.

There is a certain amount of poverty that is the result of incompetence. There are men with no ability, as we say, to make money; place them in the midst of the finest opportunities, and they fail. These people are only a few. There are persons who are ill, and so not able to earn money; but I venture to say this: if we could eliminate from the city of New York to-day that part of the problem of poverty which is the result of moral evil, the rest of it could be taken care of in a week. I would venture to raise money enough to meet every case of real need in the city of New York if only the imposture and the vice and the crime that are involved in this problem could be eliminated, if we could only find the worthy, the people that ought to be sympathetically helped and cared for.

The larger part of the poverty of the world is the result of immorality,—that which would not exist if people would only follow the teaching of Jesus.

All the vice and the crime of the world of course would be destroyed, there would be no need of any more police courts, no need of any more jails,—all that blot upon our civilization would disappear at once.

And is there any other way of eliminating it? Do police courts, do laws, do punishments, do the ordinary methods of trying to help this condition of affairs produce any appreciable result? I believe, indeed, that the world is constantly growing better, that there is less vice, less crime in the world than there was fifty years ago, and much less than there was one or two hundred years ago; but whatever progress the world has made in this direction has been purely and simply along the lines of Jesus' teaching. Nothing else has been done to lessen the amount of law-breaking and poverty. Placing laws on our statute-books produces very little effect. The improvement is simply because the world is becoming more and more enlightened, becoming more civilized. People recognize the advantages of law-

keeping, recognize that along those lines are health and happiness and prosperity, — and so are voluntarily choosing to walk in the way that Jesus has pointed out.

Take the matter of disease. We are gradually getting control of the conditions of health. Pestilences do not have any such power as they had five hundred or a hundred years ago. Investigation, in this direction and that, is learning new methods of prevention and cure ; but every one of them means what ? — means a careful, simple study in an endeavor to find the laws of God and to keep them.

If only we could perfectly understand God's laws as illustrated in the human body and in the natural forces that constitute our environment, — if we could only perfectly understand them and perfectly obey, — the health of the world would be perfect.

The way, then, to eliminate disease as a factor of human life is the way that Jesus has pointed out. We are to attempt to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and then this matter of health and all that goes along with it will be added unto us.

So in every department of human life.



As to the bitterness that exists to-day between what are called the "classes," the misunderstanding between the rich and the poor, — if the poor believed in the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and sought it first, knowing that that was the most important thing in the world; if the rich believed in it and would seek it as the first and most important thing; then what? Why, at once, in the minds of both the rich and the poor the question of the amount of money one owned, or the social position that one occupied, would take the place that belongs to it, — the secondary place; and character, manhood and womanhood, would come to the front, and take the first place; and there would be no possibility of bitterness and anger and envy and wrath, as between the rich and the poor.

Consider the effect that it would have in the world's industry. I do not believe that the labor problem is a thing which can be settled for good and all, settled in one strike or dispute. It is merely taking one step; but there will be other strikes, other disputes, other misunderstandings, and there will be no settlement of these things by economic or political moves. They are a part of the

growth of civilization. But all the evil can be taken out of them if men will only learn to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

If all the employers of the world were ready to seek justice, to see what ought to be done, not grasp to get all they can without regard to the interests and rights of others, but would seek justice,—that is, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,—and if all the workers would seek God and his righteousness, not seek to do as little work as possible for the largest pay, not seek to evade or get ahead of others merely,—if they would only follow the spirit and teaching of Jesus,—then all the bitterness and injustice and wrong that lead to so much of anarchy and social disturbance would be done away in a month.

And is there any other way? Have we not made what progress we have in industrial matters merely by the growth of the spirit of Jesus, merely by the introduction into these matters of the temper and teaching of Jesus? I do not know of one single step that has been taken that has not been along these lines.

And then in regard to another great de-

partment of human life. I was glad to note in one of our papers on New Year's Day a card by Mr. Andrew Carnegie. He pointed out the significant fact that a Czar of Russia in the last century and our President, Mr. Lincoln,—they two together,—had made an end of human slavery, so far as civilized nations were concerned; and then he called attention to another most remarkable fact, that the present Czar of Russia had taken a great step toward the abolition of war, and that, again, one of our Presidents, Mr. Roosevelt, had co-operated with him in marking a significant step in advance towards civilization.

I believe that no President since Lincoln has done a grander thing in the service of mankind than Mr. Roosevelt has done just here. He has added one imperishable leaf to the laurel of his fame by declining to undertake personally to arbitrate between Great Britain and Germany and Venezuela, and using all his interest in the establishment of the great world-tribunal at The Hague for the settlement of international disputes.

What does this mean? Can war be abolished? Yes. When the world gets a

little civilized there, will be no more wars. War sums up in itself the concentrated essence of every conceivable villany and crime. There is nothing horrible and infernal that is not a part of war. And, when the race has, as I said, become a little civilized, it will leave it behind.

How will it leave it behind? What have the Czar of Russia and President Roosevelt been doing? It will leave it behind when the world is ready to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, when it is ready to follow the spirit and the teaching of Jesus, when it is ready to recognize that the principles of right are supreme, that they are God's principles, and that they, and they only, are a firm basis on which human welfare and human happiness may rest.

The Czar of Russia, then, and our President have simply, whether they have recognized it or not, — I trust they have, — been re-echoing the saying of Jesus, that the thing for nations to do is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

There is no evil on the face of the earth that will not disappear in the presence of this one universal solvent of love for God

and love for man. We may seek remedies in other directions just as fast and as far as we will, but we are doomed to repeated and perpetual failure until we come and learn at the feet of the Nazarene the secret of the world's deliverance from evil.

Ceremony will not do it; prayer will not do it; sacraments will not do it: religious organization will not do it; political reorganization will not do it: votes will not do it; discussion will not do it; nothing will do it except bringing the heart and the life into accord with the truth and the life and the love of God.

And when we have done that, there will be no more need of praying "Thy kingdom come;" for the kingdom will be here.



## IV

HOW MUCH WE KNOW ABOUT  
JESUS, AND HOW WE KNOW IT





## IV

### WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT JESUS

I AM to ask you to go with me on a serious search for the real historic Jesus of Nazareth. The pathway may be a little technical at times, but I shall take no step which does not seem to me necessary to arrive at the end; and I ask a patient, earnest attention for the sake of the importance of the search in which we are engaged.

Certain things which I have said about Jesus have been taken serious exception to by some writers in the daily papers. I should not consider this as a very important thing in itself; but when expressions of this sort are made in the press, they indicate a wide-spread condition of the public mind; and it is for the sake of this condition, and not for the sake of the individual writers, that I start out on this search.

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Two somewhat astonishing statements have been made. First, it has been said that, if

we do not have an absolutely infallible record of the life and teaching of Jesus, then we know nothing about him at all, and have no right to make any statements concerning him. And another statement is made which is equally surprising; these writers say that Jesus distinctly claimed to be God, and that, if that claim is not admitted, then those who do not admit it make him out to be a liar and a fraud.

It does not seem to occur to them that some statement may have been put upon his lips by a writer which he did not utter. It does not seem to occur to them that they may have misunderstood the meaning of a text.

Not only are there these persons who are making these statements and claims, but in many different directions there are Unitarians and other liberals who frankly confess that in the presence of assertions like these they do not know just what to say. In other words, they have themselves no clear thought as to how much we know about Jesus or how we know it. For the sake, then, of the outside world, so far as I may reach it, and for the sake of ignorant or confused liberals, I propose to raise and answer this question.

## WHAT IS KNOWN OF JESUS 75

First, then, how much do we know about Jesus? I, of course, speak from the point of view of my own personal conviction. I believe that Jesus was born in Nazareth, the oldest son in the family of Joseph and Mary, about four years before the year One according to our present reckoning. We know that he had brothers and sisters, because they are frequently referred to in the New Testament writings.

What do we know about his childhood? Nothing very definite; and yet, when he appears in public, we can understand something from what he is and what he says as to the kind of training that he must have received, the kind of experiences through which he must have passed. He had the ordinary education of a Jewish boy; and we know that he was precocious, and more than usually intelligent and keen. We get a glimpse of this in the story that is told of his visit to the Temple with his father and mother when he was twelve years old, where he astonished the learned men, the rabbis and the doctors, by his questions and his replies.

We know also that, like most Jewish children of the time, he was taught a trade.

It was a part of the fundamental ethics of the Jews that a boy should know a trade. The Talmud tells us that the father who brings up his boy without teaching him in this way brings him up to be a thief. He then worked with his father as a carpenter. We know, because he displayed it with thought and feeling in his later life, that he must have watched the great caravans on their journeys from the West, from Rome, from Egypt, from Greece, to Damascus and the Far East; and that wider thoughts were thus kindled in the boy, wider conceptions of human nature and human life, than those that were customary on the part of his people.

He was saturated with the wisdom of the prophets and the Old Testament scriptures. When he reached the age of thirty,—that is, about the year 26 A. D.,—he appears at the baptism of John, and after John's death takes up his work.

His public life — how long was it? According to Mark, Matthew, and Luke, it was a little less than two years. According to the tradition embodied in John, it was a little over three years. We do not know, then, with certainty. It was very brief.

During this time he travelled and taught by the lakeside, along the highways, and in the fields of Galilee, and in Jerusalem. And he spoke with such simplicity, with such authority, with such power, that he left an impress on the world such as is not to be paralleled in the life of any other man.

He was gentle; he was simple; he was trustful towards the Father; he was sympathetic towards men. He lived a life which has changed the face of the world, coming just at the time he did, — “in the fulness of time,” as has been said, — when the world was ready for him. He became the source of a new religion, — a religion which has had more to do with human civilization than any other. There are other religions, one at least, which has more followers than has he; but his is the religion which has coincided with the development of human civilization, and so has left its impress on that part of the world which is the most forward-looking and has done the most to change the face of the earth.

He died — how? He was put to death in the most natural way in the world: he came into conflict (with the ecclesiastical bigotry) and prejudice of his time, and they

made away with him, as this same kind of religious bigotry and prejudice have done in so many other cases in the history of the world. He died a martyr, and disappeared into the Infinite, to be associated from that day to this with his Father and our Father, with his God and our God.

Such is the simple outline of what we know about his life. His teaching is reported in the records that have been left about him. And how much of that teaching we can accept to-day will be indicated, or at least suggested, as we go on.

It seems little that we know about him, —less than of almost any other great life in the history of the world ; and yet we seem to know him intimately, and to be able to-day to come into personal touch with that supreme, that sweet, that mighty, that gentle man.

Now how do we know about him ? As already said, some of the critics have asserted that, unless we have absolute, infallible authority, we do not know anything about him. Let us see, then, what kind of authority we have ?

There is one great branch of the Christian Church which claims to be the organized



body of God, claims to be inhabited by the Divine Spirit, claims that, when it makes an official utterance of its belief, it is speaking the very words of God with absolute authority, which ought to be binding upon every human being who hears.

I cannot here and now go into any detailed examination of this claim. I wish merely to say that nobody except the members of that Church accepts this claim; and yet these outside students and thinkers have access to all the reasons for it which are open to even the pope himself. It is, then, a matter of "faith" on the part of its adherents, rather than a matter of historic truth that can be adequately established by evidence. A noble Catholic priest in Boston once said to me, "Were it not for my faith in the infallibility of the Church, I should occupy your position."

Let me say, in passing,—and ask my readers to think the matter out,—that no man has a right to accept as a matter of "faith" any historic fact which is open to investigation. It must depend upon the evidence. And there is adequate evidence,—although, as already said, I cannot go into it now,—to prove not only the fallibility

of this Church in intellectual matters, but its fallibility in moral matters as well. If you wish to pursue the investigation, I refer you to a very remarkable work, "A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom." Its author is the sometime president of Cornell University, and recently our distinguished ambassador to Germany, the Hon. Andrew D. White. You can find abundant material in that work to substantiate the statements which have been just made.

There is another branch of the Church, the great Anglican Church, which claims that it holds a sacred deposit of divine truth ; but it is noteworthy that its adherents, both lay and clerical, differ throughout the widest range of opinion and belief. They are not nearly so much at one in their opinions as are the members of any great scientific organization anywhere in the world.

Then there is the position held by the great Protestant bodies. What is that? That they have an infallible book in their keeping, — the Bible. But here, again, it is to be noted that they do not hold the same opinions about the book, or about its teaching. Differences of belief as to doctrine,

as to practice, as to ceremonial, as to church-government, — differences in every direction prove that this infallible guide is not understood in the same way by all the different churches. That means of course that it does not practically prove itself an infallible guide.

I ask you, then, to look with me now while I consider what the Bible really is and how it has come to us. We shall find some practical considerations later, full, it seems to me, of comfort, encouragement, and inspiration, as the result of this somewhat technical inquiry to which I ask your attention.

We have a Bible in our hands. Is it infallible? The English translation certainly is not. Nobody claims that we ever had any infallible translator. What about the original? I will leave one side the Old Testament at present and confine myself to the New. Here we have twenty-seven different books, — gospel, history, letters, apocalypse, or Book of Revelation. These make up the volume. How does it happen to be one volume? It is merely a matter of convenience. These were separate books, written by different people, at different times.

They are bound together and collected in one volume merely as a matter of convenience; so that it is a set of books rather than a book.

Now is this canon of the New Testament settled? That is, is there any authoritative statement as to just how many books belong in the New Testament and how many do not? There never was any official statement made in regard to this matter before the sixteenth century. Then just the books which make up the New Testament were selected and fixed upon by an ecclesiastical council. But even here, looking at the whole Bible, the whole Church is not at one—the Catholic Church accepts the Apocrypha, which Protestants reject.

But the reformers did not consider the canon settled. Luther selected at least two of the books of the New Testament which he declared ought not to be there,—the Book of James and the Epistle to the Hebrews. He did not consider the canon as authoritatively settled by any inspired or infallible delivery.

Now what is the condition of the manuscripts of the New Testament? There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them in ex-

istence in the original Greek. Are they all just alike? Some of them do not contain all the books, some of them contain other books which are not in the present canon. But are they all alike? Every scholar knows that there are thousands of different readings. These differences are generally slight; but sometimes they extend to a verse, two or three verses, a paragraph, or half a chapter.

Now what is the oldest one of these manuscripts? They take us to the fourth century; that is, the nearest that any of these manuscripts come to Jesus is about as far away from him as we are to-day from Shakespeare.

How were these copies preserved? They were transcribed by monks, by writers in monasteries, and in different ways, to supply the small demand that existed in the ancient world. Were there any mistakes made in transcribing? We know that there were thousands; and we know that not only were there changes made through carelessness, but there were changes made deliberately and on purpose, under the influence of doctrinal bias.

There is a period of darkness of nearly two hundred years, — the first two centuries

of the Christian era, — during which we know little as to what was taking place or what was being done with the books. We know that these were not all that were written. We have to-day an apocryphal Testament, made up of Gospels and Epistles, nearly as large as the accepted book. Then we know that there were large numbers of Gospels written which have been lost. Out of all those we have, then, just the four, in the order in which they stand now, — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

It is worth while to note, in passing, that these were written in Greek — Jesus and the Apostles spoke Aramaic. Even in the originals, then, we never have the words of Jesus — only translations made by anonymous reporters.

Why do we have just four? As a hint at the state of mind of the early ecclesiastical Fathers, Irenæus, I think it is, tells us that there could not be either more nor less than four. Why? Because there were four corners of the earth, there were four winds, and the cherubim were quadriform. Therefore it was fitting that there should be just four Gospels, and no other number.

Which of them was written first? Mark,

then Matthew, then Luke, then John. When were they written, and by whom? Now note the condition of thought and feeling of the early Church at the time of Jesus himself. Jesus organized no church. Jesus, so far as we know, never wrote a word upon parchment or paper. He never directed anybody to write anything, so far as we know. Nothing was written, so far as we can discover, during his lifetime.

Note also another thing. In the early Church it was universally believed that Jesus was to return in the clouds of heaven within twenty-five years, and change the entire world order. If we believed to-day that the world was to come to an end in twenty-five years, we should not engage in writing histories, especially of our own time. Nobody thought of writing any record. The world was to come to an end before those who had seen and talked with Jesus had passed away. Why, then, make any record of his life or of his sayings?

But, as that hope was disappointed, one here and another there began to set down notes, memorabilia, — their memories of the things which they had seen or heard or that had been told them; and by and by the

Gospels came into shape,— Mark somewhere about the year 70, Matthew and Luke toward the end of the first century, John somewhere toward the middle of the second century.

Who wrote them? We do not know with any certainty as to who wrote either of them. The old church tradition is that Mark was a personal friend and companion of Peter, so that the Gospel of Mark is looked upon as that story of Jesus which Peter was accustomed to tell. What about Matthew, the next one which appeared? The only church tradition in regard to Matthew is that he wrote, not a Gospel, but memorabilia, or notes, in the Hebrew tongue. By Hebrew, however, is meant the popular speech of the time, *i.e.*, Aramaic, which stood in about the same relation to Hebrew as Spanish or French or Italian to-day does to Latin.

He wrote, then, in the Hebrew tongue; but every scholar knows that the Greek Gospel of Matthew is not a translation. (So what became of the memorabilia written in the Aramaic speech, nobody knows;) and how it came to pass that the present Gospel came in the Church to hold the position



of having been written by Matthew, nobody knows. So, for all practical purposes, and so far as we know, the Gospel of Matthew is anonymous.

Luke was supposed to have been the personal friend of Paul. So his Gospel is regarded as the Pauline story of the life and teaching of Jesus.

John's, as I said, has no value as history. It is a beautiful philosophical treatise; in some parts it is a magnificent poem. It was written, by nobody knows whom, somewhere between the years 125 and 150 A. D.

So much, then, for the records. Does this mean that we do not know anything about Jesus, that we have no reason to suppose that he said any particular thing, that we have no reason to suppose that the report of his having said some one thing carries with it any more authority than the report that he said some other thing?

What is the position we occupy in regard to it? Is it one of ignorance? Must we give up any historic Jesus because we have no infallible record of his life or his teachings? We have just the same kind of record that, taking human nature for what

it is, we might expect to have, — the only kind that we have a right to demand.

There are serious differences in the Gospels as to their reports about Jesus. If any man will sit down and read carefully the first three Gospels and make his image of Jesus from them, his ideal from them, and then read as carefully the Gospel of John he will find that he has two entirely different conceptions of Jesus; and it is practically impossible to fuse the two together into one. If the picture that is given us in John is accurate and historical, then we shall be obliged to give up the portrait that is painted for us by the synoptics.

Now let us note some of the practical results of this inquiry. We have no infallible word about the life or the teachings of Jesus. Do we therefore know nothing about him? If you admit that principle, you sweep away at one stroke the entire past history of the world. Nobody claims that we have any infallible record of the life and teaching of Lincoln, the life or the words of Washington, the life or the words of Cromwell, of Julius Cæsar, of Aristotle. Do we, therefore, know nothing about them?

Have we no valid ground for an opinion

as to what kind of men these were? If they were reported to have done a certain thing, have we no right to an opinion as to whether they probably did it? If there is another report concerning which there is some doubt, can we not sift and study the evidence, and make up our minds as to what the probabilities are, and come at a fairly accurate settlement of the question? All the entire past of the world lives in our thought merely on the basis of this kind of probability, which in the main nobody ever thinks of questioning. We do not consider it a loss; we take it as the natural condition of things, the natural result of man's being the kind of creature that he is.

Not only that. I confidently make the statement that it is one of the most fortunate things in the world that we do not have any infallible record. What has been the result of the claim of infallibility in the past? What has been its effect upon the people, — the men and the women who have made it? It has made them presumptuous, it has made them conceited, it has made them supercilious, it has made them hard, it has made them cruel.

When a man feels that he stands for God,

that he is to wield the divine thunderbolts, that he is to issue the eternal judgments, that he is to decide what is right and what is wrong, then what is the spectacle? We have human infirmity, human fallibility, human prejudice, human passion, human hatred, assuming to be Divine Power and Divine Justice, and dispensing rewards and punishments as though God were doing it.

We have a result like that of Bloody Mary in England. She said, in justification of her bitter and cruel persecutions, "Since God is going to burn people — heretics — forever in the next world, it is entirely appropriate that I, in his name and for his sake, should burn them here and now."

That is the kind of logic which springs out of this claim of divine infallibility for opinions. This has shed more blood, created more bitterness and heartache, carried more ruin and devastation, been more bitterly cruel, than any other claim or passion or influence that has been known in the history of the world. (Nothing has been so inhuman as those men who have claimed to stand and to speak for God.) And they have never repented. There is on record nowhere any recantation of those opinions. It simply

means that the power has passed away ; the claim still stands as sacred and divine, infamous as it has made itself in the history of the world.

Another consideration : Do we lose anything because the words are not stamped with the record of infallibility ? A statement is helpful to the world, not because this person or that person or another person said it ; but, if it is helpful at all, it is helpful because it carries with it inspiration and is true. If we could prove absolutely that Jesus uttered every single word that is attributed to him, that would not make them true. If we could prove that God spoke a certain sentence, that would not make it true. We should feel perfectly certain, of course, that God would not say anything that was not true ; but the truth is something that is eternal, changeless, a part of the nature of things, not something that God makes by fiat, or by mere utterance, this way or that.

God cannot make anything true that is not true, and he cannot make anything untrue that is true. The wonderful sentences that have been written by Shakespeare in "Hamlet" or "Lear," would they

be lost to the world if we should prove that Bacon wrote them? Would they be lost to the world if we could prove beyond question that nobody knew anything about their authorship? We should feel a sort of sentimental loss, of course, in giving up our personal feeling toward William Shakespeare; but the sayings would remain just as true, as poetic, beautiful, important, and helpful, no matter who said them.

So the wonderful teachings that we find in the New Testament are true or false, not because we can find out whether John wrote them, or Matthew, or Mark, or Luke. They are helpful, they are true or false, not because of anybody's opinion as to the historic character or teaching of Jesus. They help the world because the world finds out, as a result of its experience of living, that they are true, that they reach up to the heights of God's nature, that they go down into the deeps of things.

If they are true they are divine; they are a word of God; for everything that is demonstrated as truth is a part of the divine word, the divine revelation, no matter who wrote it, no matter when it was written, no matter where. No matter whether it comes

from a Christian nation or a pagan, from a white race or a black, that which is demonstrated as true is a part of the divine revelation, the real word of God.

And we are getting an infallible Bible by just this process of research, of experiment, of investigation, of living. We are finding out those words which are the bread of life, which are comfort, guidance, inspiration ; and so we are finding out what are the very utterances of God.

There is another source of comfort to us in this position of apparent uncertainty. There is not a single truth that is absolutely necessary to human life that is in doubt. If all these questions that are discussed to-day should not be settled for a thousand years, we still have light enough to take the next step in a faithful, loving, helpful, hopeful human life. Whether we will be honest and true, whether we will be friendly, whether we will be faithful in our relations towards each other, whether we will lead brave and noble and helpful lives, — these questions do not depend upon the authenticity or the accuracy of any book or any text.

One more consideration. We do not need infallibility in religion any more than

anywhere else, unless God is a being who will damn his creatures for intellectual mistakes. And if he is, then we could neither love nor worship him; for he would be both unjust and cruel.

Then another point: Jesus is just so much nearer to us because he is human like us. He wrought out through human experience that wonderful character of his. He was faithful and true, and so came into intimate relations with the Father. He was faithful and true, and so stood as the helper of his fellow-men. "He was tempted in all points like as we are," — really tempted; and he was brave and strong, and he was not false to his high ideals. The promise of reward did not touch him, the threat of pain did not touch him. And, when he went out of the city that Friday afternoon and faced death, though the cloud and the shadow hung over him and shut out even the face of the Father for a time, still he was true; and being true, and being a man at the same time, he became our example, our guide, our inspirer, our comforter, our personal friend as well as leader.

And no matter what the critics may say, this way or that, how many soever the



points which may be disputed in the future as they are to-day; the Nazarene stands out beyond any question the grandest, noblest ideal of manhood that the world has ever known, — not, it seems to me, as he has been misrepresented sometimes in ecclesiastical dogma and ecclesiastical art, — not weak, emaciated, sad, weeping, — a strong, glad man, a strong and glad man because he believed in God, because he was not afraid, because he had a word for humanity, because he knew that he had come to give a blessing to the world. A strong, glad, pure, true, loving, tender, consecrated figure he stands out; they cannot hide him. Dogma, mist, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, they cloud him for a little while; but the light from his face shines, and the clouds scatter and break, and he looks upon us the Son of God, the Son of man, our brother and our friend again.

And though he stands down there nearly two thousand years away in the past, he also stands up there in the future, away ahead of what the world has yet attained, an ideal unapproached as yet; and so we reverently accept him as our leader. We will follow him. We will consecrate ourselves to his

dreams, to his service ; and we will believe that he spoke the words that were whispered to him of the Father ; and so we can safely tread in his steps until the day comes when the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy shall reign in the hearts of men.

V

JESUS AND THE FATHER



## V

### JESUS AND THE FATHER

IT is next our task to consider the principal teachings of Jesus as recorded in the various Gospels concerning the relation between himself and the Father. For the purpose we have in mind we will not raise any critical questions as to the authenticity or the relative authority of this Gospel or that; we will take them just as they stand. Of course, this will give whatever advantage there is to those who hold the traditional views concerning Jesus. If they are not supported in this way of course they cannot be supported at all.

As we study his words, one thing that strikes us at the outset is that, so far as any record is made, Jesus never had any doubts about God. And yet, as is said, he was tempted in all points like as we are, — like as we are. If he struggled and fought over the whole ground of human life, he must have had doubts sometimes. I do not believe

that the man ever lived, who did any thinking, who did not find himself sometimes shadowed, sometimes perplexed, sometimes wondering as to the nature, the character of the power manifested in the universe.

Most men have wondered as to whether or not they had any right to believe in a personal God, as to whether or not he was our Father, as to whether or not he cared. I have been acquainted with a great many people who believed in a personal God, believed in his goodness, in his general care of the world, but who found it very difficult to trust that he ever thought about them, or had any personal care for them.

So far as we have any record, there is no trace of any doubt of this sort in the mind of Jesus. If he had had his battles, they were over, and he had won; for he comes before us as a teacher, serene, confident, apparently undisturbed.

Now what kind of a God is it that Jesus believes in? I wish to consider this at some little length. I shall not weary the reader by quoting verbatim from this Gospel or that; but he will easily recognize the particular ones to which reference is made.

In the first place, he teaches that God is

the common, equal Father of all men,—not the Father of the Jews only, but the Father of the Gentiles, too; not the Father of the good only, the Father of the bad as well. He is our Father. This is worth noting for a moment. Jesus shows a broader outlook than we find ordinarily at his time either in Galilee or Judea, or anywhere else in the world.

God in the past, all the gods, had been localized. They had been the gods of particular peoples or tribes; but the God that Jesus believed in was not only Father, but our Father, the Father of all mankind; for he rebukes the Jewish exclusiveness when he says, "You pride yourselves on being the children of Abraham, and so standing in special relations to God; but I say unto you that many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, while you, who think you are to be specially favored, will be outside." He is the universal Father, then.

It may be noted that I am not arguing for the accuracy of Jesus' views; I am merely setting them forth.

He is, then, the Father of good people

and bad people alike ; he is kind to the unthankful and the evil ; he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.

Here was a remarkable spiritual view for that age and time. We have noted of course since that age, through our study and investigation of the working of the natural world, that the forces of God go on in an unvarying order. The farmer who is profane, who never knows how to pray, who cares neither for God nor man, will raise just as good a crop of wheat as the most pious man in the world, if he complies with the natural conditions — which, mark you, are the divine conditions — for raising wheat. God in this manifestation of himself is impartial ; and the good man has no advantage over the evil, except so far as those things are concerned which are the natural result of goodness.

God is not only the Father of all men, good and bad, but he takes account of and cares for the lower forms of life. Jesus tells us that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice and the love and the tender pity of the Father. We may wonder at the mystery of the conflict and suffering and



death in the lower world; but the Father of Jesus cares for the birds as well as for men.

Not only that. He cares also for the flowers. "Consider the lilies of the field," says Jesus. "I tell you that Solomon in all the glory of his magnificent court was not arrayed in such beauty and wonder as these. If God, then, takes care for the grasses of the field, those things which exist to-day and to-morrow are gone,"—his argument is,— "how much more shall he care for you— you that have so little faith in his goodness and his protection!"

There is another remarkable feature about this teaching of Jesus concerning the Father. Up to this time—and it is true concerning most of the nations of the world to-day, and it is true inside Christendom and in the Church as well—God had been supposed to be acceptably worshipped here, and not there; in one place, and not in another; by one people, not by another; according to one rite or order of service, and not according to another.

Jesus, it will be remembered, is talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, and she points to Mount Gerizim as a holy place

where God was supposed in old time to have been acceptably worshipped; and Jesus speaks of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, where the Temple was located, and he said to her, "The hour cometh, and now is, when neither on Gerizim nor on Moriah shall men exclusively or peculiarly or more acceptably worship the Father." God is not a spirit, — Jesus does not say that, — "God is spirit," the universal spirit and life of all the worlds; and one place is no holier to him than any other.

Mark one important distinction. A place may be very holy to me on account of personal associations. I may find it easier to get into a prayerful or reverential mood there; but that does not mean, teaches Jesus, that it is because God is there peculiarly, and not somewhere else. Jesus' forefathers, the Jews, believed that God could even be shut up in a box, which they called the ark, and wherever that ark was, there God was; and when the Philistines, their enemies, captured the ark, they had captured God and carried him off, away from his people, so that he could no longer be of service to them; he was in the hands of the enemy. That was the conception of God held in

old times, and which two-thirds of the world have hardly yet outgrown.

Jesus teaches that God is spirit, that he is in one place just as much, just as completely, as in another. He is to-day in Africa, or China, or Egypt as truly as he is in Jerusalem, or Rome, or in the most revered cathedral in the world. "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

He sweeps away with a wave of his hand all ritual, all form, all ceremony, all sacrament, — not absolutely condemning them, but as being essential to the worship of God. If men — and this is according to the teaching of Jesus — find a holy day, or a ritual, or a place, or a sacrament really helpful to them, to their spiritual life; if they can use it, and not make it a substitute for God; if they can use it, and not make it the means of putting up a barrier between them and their brethren; if they can use it, and not become exclusive and narrow in its use, — well. But never are we to think that the Quaker, without any ritual, or service, or sacrament, may not as truly come into communion with the Father as he who has the most elaborate service to be found anywhere in the world.

Also Jesus would say, Do not dare, you who count yourselves Christians, to think that any one anywhere else in the world, though he uses another name, cannot come into loving relation with the Father.

Jesus teaches that we are not to be bound by any days. When they accused him of working on the Sabbath, — that is, of healing some one, doing good to some one on the Sabbath, — what does he say? He says, "My Father has been at work from the beginning of the world, on all days, Sabbaths as well as any other," — that is what the passage means, "My Father worketh hitherto," all the time, "and I work. The Sabbath was not made to be a burden to people: it was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" that is, the interests, the real necessities of man, are not to be sacrificed to any day. See how free, broad, grand, spiritual, is the conception which Jesus has concerning the Father.

Another phase of this character of God in his relation to men. Consider it in the matter of prayer. At first, as we read the words of Jesus, we might think that he had condemned such prayer as we have as a part of our church service. He forbids public

prayer ; he condemns those who pray in synagogues and standing in the corners of the streets. He says, If you want to pray, go into your closet and shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret, — not pray to be seen of men.

But, if we study carefully the customs of that time, we shall see, I think, that he does not mean to condemn this common lifting up of our hearts and thoughts in worship and aspiration, which is the true idea of public prayer in our churches. It was the way of certain persons to make a display of their prayers, so that people might see how good they were, — this is what he really condemns.

And what does he mean by prayer, — what kind of prayer? He says there is no need of detailing your wants and needs, cataloguing everything for God ; before you open your lips, he knows what you need. It was the custom in old times for people to have certain consecrated phrases ; they believed that these phrases possessed magical power, that they could even compel the gods by the use of those phrases ; and so the people said them over and over. But Jesus says : Do not pray with vain repeti-

tions, as the heathen do, who think they are going to be heard for their much speaking. Pray simply ; your Father knows, before you begin, what you need.

Also he argues against the idea that we need to urge and beseech him, as though we could storm heaven by our petitions and gain things that we desire by our urgency. Jesus condemns all this. You remember the two little stories he tells to illustrate his point. He says, in substance : —

Here is a man who has unexpectedly had some people come to him late at night. The shops are closed ; and it is too late for him to get any supplies of food. He gets up and goes to his neighbor, and asks him to come to his relief ; and the neighbor calls out to him : I do not wish to be disturbed. I am in bed, and my children are in bed ; it is too late for me to serve you to-night.

But Jesus says by urgency you can even get a man like that to do things for you ; you can get him to rise from his bed and supply your needs.

And then he tells the other story, about the unjust judge. He is one who is not disposed to do right ; and a widow, who has been defrauded, comes to him and pleads

for help. Jesus says the judge feared neither God nor regarded men; but he said to himself, Unless I do something for her, this widow, by her continual coming, will trouble me; so I will help her, to be rid of her. Jesus does not speak of those cases as examples for us to follow. He says: If you can gain your end under such conditions, how much more will your heavenly Father, who is not an unjust judge, and who does not find it troublesome to help those in need, do the things for you that you require!

He even goes so far as to say, You need not plead with him, you need not trouble him; he is already a good deal more willing to give you the things that you need than you are to take them.

If we stop and think a moment, can we not see how profoundly true this is? God would give us the best things, the highest things, the noblest things,—his spirit, his character, patience, sweetness, trust, unselfishness, love,—in other words, he would give us himself; and we are not ready to take him, because in our selfishness we do not want to be those things.

The Father of Jesus, then, is more ready

to help us than we are to be helped, more ready to give us the best things than we are to take them.

Then there is another quality of the Father, as Jesus sets him forth, which we need to understand. The great classic of the Gospels as touching the relation of the sinner to God and as teaching the divine doctrine of forgiveness is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here is the place of all others for Jesus to have taught some things which he did not teach, if they were really true.

What does he teach? He tells this beautiful story. The young man demands of his father a share of his inheritance, receives it, and goes away into a far country; he is tired of his home, of the restrictions and restraints of it; he does not understand his father's attitude towards him, and he does not wish to bear it any longer; he wishes to be free. So he goes off, and wastes his substance in riotous living until the inevitable end comes and he is in want.

He wakes up, and finds himself hungry; finds his clothing, which was so fine at the outset, in rags; finds that the friends, who



## JESUS AND THE FATHER III

flocked around him while he had money, are not to be found. There is nobody to help him; and his need becomes so extreme that at last he goes to a man who keeps swine, raising them for the market, and begs that he will employ him, and let him have for food some of the pods which the swine fed on.

When he has got to this last extremity he sits down and begins to think: There is my father at home,—my brother. Even the servants there have enough and to spare; and I perish with hunger. I will arise, and go back to my father; I will tell him how ashamed I am; I will tell him what a fool I have made of myself; I will tell him how I misunderstood his goodness and his care. I will not ask him to take me back again as his boy,—perhaps that would be too much to expect; I will ask him to give me a place with the servants. That, at any rate, will prevent my starving.

So he arises and starts for home. And what does the father do? Does the father say, There is a governmental exigency at stake and I cannot forgive you until expiation has been made, until justice has been satisfied? Does his father say, It would be

setting a bad example to other people if I just took him back into my arms as my boy? Does he say there must be a blood atonement, that somebody has got to suffer? Does he say that he has got to believe some definite thing before he takes him, that he has got to partake of a sacrament, that he has got to go through some form of ritual, — does he say anything about these things?

Not one word! And now let us stop and think; Jesus was teaching falsehood and misleading the world if these other things were important and he said nothing about them. Did he say anything about them? He said simply that the father, who had been mourning every day that his son had been gone, saw him coming a great way off, and he absolutely did nothing at all except to run and meet him; and when he got there he fell on his neck, clasped him in his arms, burst into tears, and rejoiced over the home-ward turning of his boy.

And when the boy who had not been away made complaint about it, the father said, Why, you have been with me all the time, and everything I have is yours; but this my son who was dead is alive again; he has been lost and is found. Do I not well

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to rejoice, to kill the fatted calf and make merry over his recovery?

This is the kind of Father in heaven that yearns for and reaches out after the wandering and the sinful, if we may trust to the teaching of Jesus.

So much for the nature of the Father, his character and attitude towards the world.

We need now to turn and consider a little in detail the personal relation which existed between Jesus and the Father, as he himself represents it. It has been said, of course, it is part of the theology of Christendom, that Jesus is God, that he is the second person in a mysterious trinity. But what does he say about his relation to the Father? Should it not be said here, as was said in regard to the doctrine of forgiveness, if Jesus knew that he was the second person in a mysterious trinity, if he knew that he was God, if he knew that thousands of people in the years that were to come would be racked and tortured and burnt because he had not expressed himself plainly, does it seem credible that he would have left a matter like that in doubt?

What does he say? God is always his Father, never anything else. He is the Son of man; this phrase occurs quite commonly

in the New Testament. It is an Old Testament phrase, and is generally supposed to have had a Messianic meaning; but, commonly, he is spoken of as the son of the Father. He is God's messenger; he has been sent into this world for a specific purpose, to perform a definite work, to teach, to lead, to lift up men. Whatever power he has, he says, is conferred on him by the Father. Whatever he does, he does through the Father. Whenever he delivers a message, he says, This is the Father's message; I am speaking for him. This is the attitude all the way through.

Jesus says in specific terms, "My Father is greater than I." He will not even allow any one to call him good. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." This is the attitude that Jesus takes towards the Father everywhere.

But we shall need to consider one or two passages which are supposed to bear a stronger meaning than has so far been allowed, and a higher meaning. What are these passages?

"I and my Father are one." This is in the tenth chapter of John. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? Then the Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" — men were being addressed in those words. "If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, — and the scripture cannot be broken, — say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

Now they had just charged him with making himself God; they wished to get an occasion against him as a blasphemer. If he was God, if he was the second person of the trinity, is not this just the place for him to say it? But he does not say it. He does not say anything of the kind. He defends himself, not for calling himself God, but for calling himself the Son of God, by quoting from the Old Testament an illustration of men in that day being called gods, because the spirit of God had come upon them and they had thus partaken of the nature of God.

If there is anywhere in the New Testament a place where Jesus should have said he was God, if he thought so, this is the place; but he said nothing of the kind; he simply reiterated over again that he was the Son of God.

And now as to the oneness of Jesus and the Father, let us turn to the seventeenth chapter of John, this same Gospel, and see what light we can get on the interpretation of these words. He has been praying for his disciples, — that long prayer recorded in John. He says, “Neither for these alone do I pray, but also for those who believe on me through their word, that they all may be one,” — now notice, — “that they all may be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

See how he interprets the passage himself. He says that the oneness which he asserts between himself and the Father is precisely the same kind of a oneness that he wishes to exist between the disciples and himself: May they be one in me as I am one in thee. Is it not perfectly plain that it is a spiritual oneness that he is talking about?

There was a great deal of speculation in those days; and, in order that we may

understand the New Testament, we ought, if possible, to understand a little of the thought of the time. There was a great deal of speculation as to the nature of the soul. Many believed — it is common Oriental thought — that all souls were emanations from God, sparks from the central fire, the eternal Father of life ; and, if they were, they were of the nature of God, one with God, just as, if I take a candle and light it from another candle which is already aflame, I have a perfect right to say that the second flame is one with the first. It is the same kind of a light or flame ; it is kindled by it, partakes of its nature, in one sense is identical with it.

We need to remember, in studying the New Testament, that Jesus was an Oriental. It is one of the commonest things in the world for Orientals, and mystics in Europe, to speak of God coming into them, possessing them, being in them, so that they are in union with the divine. It would be well to note, as an interpreter of the nature of Jesus, that wonderful Oriental, Mozoomdar, the great teacher and preacher and reformer of India. When he was in this country he said : You do not understand

Jesus ; he was an Oriental. I am an Oriental ; we Orientals understand him. He spoke in Oriental figures of speech, and out of Oriental types and methods of thought. The trouble is you make an Englishman of him.

Such, then, according to the teaching of the New Testament, according to the reported words of Jesus himself, was the character of God and his personal relations towards him.

We must now touch on one other matter. How did Jesus live with God ? And let us ask ourselves, as we go along, the question as to whether or not that kind of life is possible for us to-day. What was Jesus' outward life ?

It was a failure from the worldly point of view. Jesus had no home ; no home-love, wife, or child. He was poor, never had any money ; he had nowhere to lay his head. He was dependent on the care and ministry of his friends. He made himself of no reputation. He did not seek or attain any ordinary worldly end ; and at the last even his disciples forsook him and fled, and he died as a criminal, outcast and alone.

But—and this is the point for us to



notice — his belief about the Father, and his love for him, and his trust in him were such that his life was serene and peaceful all the way through. He lived this kind of a life as one who sought a definite, distinct, and noble end, the attainment of which could not be thwarted or even disturbed by these incidents of his career.

He sailed over the ocean of life, so to speak, like one of our magnificent ocean greyhounds across the Atlantic, which does not trouble about the currents, the head winds, the buffetings of the waves which thunder against its sides and rush over its decks, but moves straight on, seeking a port.

So Jesus moved across the face of this human life of ours, undisturbed, serene, untroubled. He was not cast down because of apparent failure, not elated by temporary success; he did not trouble about money; he did not trouble about fame; none of these things moved him. He lived as one who believed that these things might be occasions for service, might be incidents in a career, but were one side of the great object which he had in mind.

There existed, at the time when he lived in Palestine, some of the worst poverty and

some of the most dishonest wealth that the world has ever known. He recognized this poverty, he recognized the dishonesty ; but none of these things shook his faith or disturbed his serenity. He seemed to believe that God was ruling, that he had this world in his hands, and that he knew what the outcome was to be ; and so he preached the coming of the kingdom, and he told the poor that they were not to be troubled over their poverty. He even pronounced a blessing upon them if they were only true to themselves.

He taught, in other words, that there was something deeper and higher in human life than either poverty or wealth, than ignorance or education, than social success or social failure. He taught that the man was the principal thing, and the kind of man he made himself in the midst of these experiences was the chief thing for which to care.

When Jesus lived, there were political disturbances. His people were ground down under a heel of tyranny as rough and heavy as the world has ever known : it looked as though there was no outcome for the people. But did that disturb him ? He preached

the coming of the kingdom of God as though he knew it was coming, and this condition of things was merely a cloud, a vapor, that, when the sun was up, would vanish away.

There was another thing he had to meet which was discouraging. Some of us have found it discouraging. His friends around him, those that stood closest to him, did not understand him, misrepresented and misinterpreted him. His friends were dull, could not rise to the height of the conception of his wonderful ideas; and so he was alone, even when his disciples were about him.

But this did not make him bitter. He found excuses for them; and at the last, in Gethsemane, after he had said, Could you not have watched with me for one hour? he says, I know,—the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. So he excused and was tender towards them.

Then, not only friends who could not comprehend or sympathize, but malignant enemies who sought to blacken his character and blast his life,—even those did not disturb him; and at the last he found excuses, too, for them. He said, Father, forgive them; they do not understand what they

are doing ; they do not know what I am, or what I am here for, or what I am trying to do for them. So forgive them. Even this did not discourage him.

And at the end he did what, thank God, this humanity of ours is wonderful enough to have done over and over and over again : he met death for his truth. Rather than be false to his convictions, false to his mission, he faced the cross and the tomb. For one minute he shrinks. He says, Father, if it is possible, do not let me have to bear this ; do not let me drink this cup if it can be avoided ; but, if I must drink it, thy will, not mine, be done.

For one minute, apparently, he loses his vision of the Father, and cries out, " Why hast thou forsaken me ? " Everybody else forsook him ; but why should his Father ? But that passes ; and he says, " Into thy hands I commend my spirit," and bows his head ; the end has come.

So Jesus lived with the Father, — lived a life superior to conditions ; lived a life undisturbed by the exigencies of his career ; lived a life that could afford to look down on the questions of poverty and hunger and homelessness and lack of sympathy and the

bitterness of his foes ; lived a life that seemed to have a meaning running all through it, that the world could not disturb, that death could not contradict ; lived a life of which death was even the crowning end and the victory that led to the life eternal.

*If* God is ; *if* God be the kind of God that Jesus thought him ; *if* God be our Father, as he was his ; *if* our lives here have a meaning and an outcome, — may we not live as did he, and triumph as did he ?



## VI

### THE DISCIPLE AND THE WORLD





## VI

### THE DISCIPLE AND THE WORLD

THE author of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as saying, "Ye are of this world: I am not of this world."

It is a part of the ritual of some at least of the churches that, when a person presents himself for membership, he shall take as a part of his vow the promise to renounce the world. Worldliness throughout the entire history of Christianity has been supposed to sum up in one word all those things which stand over against the Christian life, as opposed to it. The New Testament in one place speaks of Satan as the "god of this world."

These two words, "this world," are supposed to indicate all the organizations, institutions, tendencies, which are evil, which are selfish, which are opposed to the higher Christian life. Nearly all the saints, the traditional saints of the Church, have been men who have given up the world. They have

fled from the world. They have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; they have renounced the flesh, they have renounced money; and in this way they supposed that they had given themselves more completely to the true service of God.

If a man to-day in some parts of Christendom, and especially in the Catholic Church, proposes to become a distinctively religious man, it means that he withdraws himself from the world. If a woman is to become a religious woman in the technical use of that term, she takes the veil, she enters a convent, she joins some association or order, so that her life is supposed to be henceforth an unworldly life.

It is, then, important to our comprehension of the ideal of the true disciple, a follower of Jesus, that we should understand what worldliness means, what it meant two thousand years ago, what it means to-day, what the disciple's attitude toward the world should really be. In order to come at it understandingly, we shall need to consider for a little while what attitude Jesus himself took towards the ordinary ongoings of the worldly life about him. Then we should note the attitude of Paul,—the predom-

inating New Testament attitude outside the Gospels, — and then consider what the spirit of Jesus would lead us to do to-day.

In the first place, then, what attitude did Jesus take towards the world of his time? Many of the organizations, institutions, interests, which make up the civilized world of this twentieth century were not in existence, — at least in the immediate environment of Jesus, — so that we can judge only from a study of his spirit, as expressed in his words and actions, what he would have done in regard to them.

For example, Jesus did not come into contact with what to-day we should speak of as a literary life. He had nothing to do with that which seems to absorb so much of the interest of this modern world, and which we class under the name of science. No word of his is recorded which would indicate that what we mean by science had ever entered his mind.

There was little in the way of music or art or any of those things which so interest the æsthetic side of human nature. Yet we may imagine that Jesus would have cared for beautiful things, because he does note and call our attention to the beauty of the

natural world around him. Possibly, he might have felt that for a man to devote himself in any exclusive way to what we call the æsthetic side of life would have been to waste time and thought and care on things relatively of less importance than those he might have given himself to ; but he certainly showed an appreciation of the beauty of the handiwork of the Father.

There are two or three great phases of life as they presented themselves to him at that time which are worthy of our attention. What was his attitude towards wealth, towards rich men? If we had only the Gospel of Luke as our guide, we should be obliged to say that it was one of uncompromising hostility and condemnation. Matthew tells us in one of the beatitudes that Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Luke tells us that he said simply, "Blessed are ye poor," — saying nothing about the spirit.

And the parable of Dives and Lazarus lets us into the secret of the way in which the author of this Gospel looked at wealth. Dives is in the place of torment ; Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom. They are in sight of each other ; and Dives prays Abraham

that Lazarus may be sent with a drop of water to cool his tongue. Abraham does not say a word to Dives about his having been a wicked man; not a word is said about Lazarus' having been a good man. Lazarus had been poor; Dives had been rich. And now things are being evened up; that is all so far as that parable is concerned.

Abraham said to Dives, "You in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted, and you are tormented." That is the doctrine of the Gospel of Luke, consistently taught throughout. Riches are looked upon as evil, and poverty as something which God treats with great compassion and will compensate in some way by and by.

But if we take a larger survey of the attitude of Jesus, I think we shall have to modify this view. He was a friend of Simon, who was rich; he was a friend of Zaccheus, who was not only rich, but a publican. He does, indeed, do this—and you will see the important distinction between hostility to wealth as such and hostility to that thing which Jesus really opposed—he tells the story of the foolish

man, who wonders in his prosperity what he shall do to take care of his goods. He says, "I shall have to tear down my barns and build greater." And Jesus said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then what shall become of all the accumulated wealth?" Jesus says, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." And he says, also, that, if a man exchanges his soul, his real life, for any wealth or prosperity, he makes a disastrous bargain.

Considering, then, in the broadest way the teaching of Jesus, considering what he says about the difficulty of a rich man's getting into heaven, what he says to the rich young man whom he loved, but who was not willing to give away his goods for the sake of following the Master, — taking into account all these, I think we shall find it perfectly clear that Jesus simply recognized accumulated wealth as a danger, just as absorption in anything else may be a danger.

The more fascinating, the more desirable a thing is, the greater its temptation and the more difficult it is for a man to use these things "as not abusing them," as Paul has it in his Epistle to the Corinthians. No

matter what it may be, if a man loves, and is pursuing, some worldly object, it becomes a source of danger to him. And yet in those parables about the talents Jesus seems to teach almost an opposite doctrine. It is the man who had ten talents given him and the man who had five, who used them well, who received commendation ; and it was the man who received only one, and who mis-used that, who was condemned.

Jesus' attitude, then, towards wealth is precisely the same as his attitude towards any great interest of human life that may distract a man's attention, and take away his thought from something that is in itself more important.

What attitude did Jesus hold towards such society as existed in his day? He was no ascetic. He says, "John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and you accused him of having a devil. I have come both eating and drinking ; and you say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners."

He was no ascetic. He entered into the life of his time freely, simply, naturally, humanly, accepting the hospitality of the rich and sharing the outcast condition and

the privations of the poor with equal sympathy, with equal comprehension of those things that are deeper and higher than either poverty or wealth.

What was his attitude towards that organization of society that we speak of as government? His people, those who regarded themselves as most patriotic, were in a state of seething, restless rebellion, ready to flame out into open opposition at every opportunity. Jesus encouraged nothing of the sort. He said, when they asked him whether it was proper to pay tribute to Cæsar, "Let me see one of your coins." When they brought it to him, he said, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They answered, "It is Cæsar's." Then he announced that eternal principle,—"Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." That is the attitude which he took in regard to the organized institutions and forces of the world.

We shall see as we go on, when we come to discuss what, it seems to me, is the proper attitude of the Christian disciple in the modern world, something more particular in the way of carrying out the principles of the Master.



Let us turn now to consider the Pauline attitude. I do this because Paul is the great representative figure of the early Church after the Master had passed away, and because his teaching has done more to shape Christendom throughout its history than that of any other man. Let us note a few things that he says:—

“The time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none, and those that weep as though they wept not, and those that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy as though they possessed not, and those that use the world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

Paul's teaching in regard to a great many things — as concerning marriage and slavery, — has been misunderstood because his point of view has not been taken. What was that point of view? It is difficult for us to place ourselves definitely and clearly in his footsteps at the present time. He believed that the present order of things was coming to an end at almost any time, possibly within a year, within five years, — at any rate, before that generation passed away. So he said: Suppose you are a slave: what differ-

ence does it make? What is the use of struggling against this present political and social order for the sake of abolishing slavery? In a few years this whole constitution of things is to pass away; and you, at any rate if you are a Christian, are a free man of Christ.

Suppose you are free: do not pride yourself on it; that is not a matter of first-class importance. If you are a free man by right, you are a bondman of Christ. Live for him. Suppose you are married: that is only an incident in life. It is better for you not to be married, he says. Why? Because he that is married will be concerned about pleasing and taking care of his wife. He cannot devote himself entirely to the one thing which, in view of the immediate end of the world that was approaching, was to the mind of Paul of far more importance.

Suppose you are rich: do not let that absorb you. It is only a little while, and all these things will pass away. Buy as though you possessed not, live as though you were not rich; that is, not absorbing yourselves in these things, not using them selfishly. Suppose you are poor: do not

worry about it; and do not let the rich look down upon the poor, and do not let the poor look with envy towards the rich. All these things are of slight importance. The kingdom of God is imminent, and may appear at any moment. The one great thing for you to do, then, is to be absorbed in thought and labor that shall prepare you and help prepare the world for this great transformation.

If Paul had known that the world was to exist eighteen or nineteen hundred or two thousand years after his time, that everything was to go on after the orderly fashion which it has followed, there is no sort of question that his teaching would have been very largely modified by these considerations. Paul taught precisely what you or I would have taught in his condition and at his time; and he laid his finger in all earnestness and with all emphasis on principles which are eternal, and which are of as much importance to-day as they were at the time when he lived and spoke and wrote and passed from country to country as a messenger of the coming of that kingdom in which he believed.

The spirit of Jesus, the spirit of Paul,

has not passed away. The history of the world has not been such as the early Church expected ; but the temper of Jesus, the attitude of Jesus, the unworldliness of Jesus, the unworldliness of Paul, transformed to suit the changing conditions, are as imperative towards the life of to-day as they were towards that of two thousand years ago.

Let us, then, for a little while consider what attitude the real disciple of Jesus ought to maintain concerning these great phases of human life which in their entirety make up what Jesus and Paul meant when they spoke of "the world," and what we may speak of still in similar terms.

"The world" as an order exists to-day, and it is in opposition in the main to the kingdom of God ; and the hope of humanity lies in this — that this worldly spirit shall gradually be superseded by the spirit of the Christian disciple.

What in the main is that attitude ? What is it to be a disciple of Jesus ? It is to care chiefly for the things for which Jesus cared ; that is, for the soul, for the essential human life, for God, for spiritual things, for righteousness, for truth, for love, for tenderness,

for pity, for sympathy, for helpfulness, — for these things which constitute the spirit of Jesus.

Now, let us consider what a man's attitude to-day ought to be, if he is a Christian, if he is a follower of Jesus, towards some of these great concerns of the world.

Being a follower of Jesus, living out his spirit, being a Christian in the true sense of that word, being a disciple, is nothing else but being an ideal man. For the experience of the world has demonstrated that these which we call the Christian virtues are only the human virtues, — the virtues which help men: the thoughts, the feelings, the conduct, which tend to the welfare and the happiness of mankind.

What should be the attitude, then, of a disciple of Jesus to-day towards money? Would he be hostile to capital, as some who call themselves Socialists, are? Would he oppose the possession or the accumulation of money? Not at all. He would fight, however, for the accumulation of money by such methods, such processes, such ways as should not hurt others, in ways that are honest, that are fair, that are just, so that, when he has accumulated the money, it shall,

so far as anything of that sort can be in this world, be his, righteously his.

But, as Jesus said in his day, the possession of large wealth must be regarded as a danger to the ordinary man. There is such a fascination, such an interest in it, it gives a man such power, that it will be harder for him to devote himself to the high, fine, spiritual, human things of life than if he had not this great accumulation to care for. But, if he be strong enough, masterful enough, perhaps he may not be a nobler Christian for the possession of this wealth, but he may be a mightier, stronger, more serviceable Christian, because he is possessed of greater power.

For, let a man have power, whether it be physical, mental, moral, spiritual, whether it be power of money or of brain, no matter what it may be, — if he has power, then, of course, he is mightier for the doing of things. But, if he is a consistent disciple of Jesus, he must remember always that the end of life is not the money, the accumulation of the capital, however honestly it may be made; and that all this is only an incident of life, an opportunity, something to be used.

For Browning has touched the very essence of the Christian life when he refers to the "development of a soul" as being the one chief thing that is of value in human life. It is what a man becomes, not what he owns, not what he does, not what he enjoys; it is what, through the experiences of this life, whatever they may be, he trains himself to be, which is important according to the teaching of Jesus.

The man is foolish who sells his essential life, his manhood, his soul, his loyalty to God, his loyalty to his fellow-men, that which makes him what he is, — the man is foolish who sells it for anything, because he is worth more than all the worlds. That is the teaching of Jesus; that is the attitude of a true disciple towards life.

Consider the matter of ambition. There is nothing wrong in a man's being ambitious. If one feels in him the germs and possibilities of power, it is as natural for him to wish to grow, to develop, to expand, as it is for a young oak to become mighty. But when a man, for the sake of office, or power, fame, place, anything that ambition appeals to, sacrifices the welfare of another man, is false to the rights or interests of another

man, then what? He becomes false to himself, false to God, and he pays too big a price for the prize that he desires. This is the teaching of Jesus in regard to ambition.

It is said, "He made himself of no reputation;" "he went about doing good," — went about living for others, letting reputation take care of itself. That is the Christian attitude towards greatness. You remember that Jesus tells the disciples, when two of them express their desire for a place in his coming kingdom, that it has been the custom among the Gentiles all over the world for great people to exercise authority, to be lords and rulers, to dominate the lives of others; but in his kingdom it is not to be so. The great in the kingdom of God are the ones who greatly serve.

And the world is finding that out. As we look back down the pathway up which advancing humanity has come, it is the men who have served the world that we praise and honor; and we are coming more and more to execrate, no matter how mighty they may have been, the men who simply served themselves, who have been selfish, who have been ambitious at the expense of the lives,



the welfare, the happiness, of even the meanest and the poorest.

What shall be the attitude of a true disciple of Jesus towards the æsthetic side of life? It has been common for us to suppose that it is all right for a man to devote himself utterly to a literary life, or a musical life, or an artistic life. They say, at any rate, he is not a sinner who does this; he is creating beautiful things. But, if a man selfishly devotes himself to literature or music or art, painting or sculpture, or even to science, — if he selfishly devotes himself to these things, he is something less than an ideal disciple of the Master.

A man can be just as unhuman in devoting himself to these things as he can be in devoting himself to money or ambition or any other selfish end. These things are simply opportunities which a man may use for making himself something high and fine, and for rendering a great service to mankind. In other words, all these things, no matter how sweet and true they may seem to be in themselves, are to be subordinated, according to the Christian ideal, to the man's life, to his higher aims, to what he is and what he proposes to become.

Shall a man indulge himself in pleasure if he proposes to be a disciple of Jesus? That depends, — it depends upon what it means. Pleasure-loving of any kind has ordinarily been classed as antagonistic to the Christian character and the Christian life; and, undoubtedly, if a man gives himself to pleasure-seeking as an end, he is not only something less than a Christian, he is something less than a man.

But pleasure, that kind of pleasure which does not hurt, which does not degrade, this is right and well, provided we have earned the right to it, provided we use it as relaxation, as recreation in the true meaning of that word, — “re-creation.” That use of these things which rests a man, strengthens him, and makes him better fitted for a life of usefulness to his fellow-men, may be a virtue. That which devotes itself to these ends as a mere selfish indulgence lowers the tone and dignity of the individual life and makes a man unfitted for the service of his fellow-men.

Here, then, is the principle, easy for us to note, and understand, if we will. The true Christian life is the life that has for its aim and end the development of the individ-

ual soul into the highest and best of which it is capable. And God has so arranged our human affairs that the man who does this is also the man who renders the highest and noblest service to his fellow-men.

There is no possible antagonism between those things which are best for the individual and those which are best for the race. Human experience has demonstrated beyond all question that serving our fellows in any department of life, trying to add to the sum total of their good, trying to make them better, nobler, to add to their happiness, is in itself of necessity cultivating the qualities in our own nature which make us most like God.

The ideal, then, is simply this : We are here in this world ; we are surrounded by all the ongoings and activities of life, — literature, science, music, art, commerce, — all the interests that make up civilization ; we are in the midst of these. Every phase of this life is a double possibility. Nothing in itself is evil ; it simply depends entirely upon the attitude towards and the use which we make of these different forms and phases of human activity.

We are here, not for the sake of the little

life that we lead to-day. If we wish to live superior to the temptations and trials that are about us on every hand, then we must have an end, an aim, that reaches out beyond that which we can see. We must have an ideal of what it means to be a man, to be a disciple of Jesus, to be a child of God.

We must remember that this means the building up of our own characters, the becoming all of which we are capable, and that these incidents of life are nothing but opportunities. They are of no value in themselves. We can misuse them, we can use them if we have them, we can turn them to our account. If we do not have them, we can get along without them.

The Christian idea is that you cannot put a man into this world anywhere, in any condition, in the midst of any circumstances, so that he shall of necessity be defeated as to the meaning and outcome of his life. As Paul says,—it is as true in the modern as in the ancient world,—Suppose you are a slave: be a man in your bonds, live superior to that condition, use the opportunities and conditions of your life to develop your manhood. Suppose you are free: that does not necessarily make you a man. Freedom is

only an opportunity. You have a larger capacity, larger possibilities, than another man. Then your responsibility is greater. Suppose you are rich: remember that you are superior to the wealth, and that the power of wealth is only an opportunity which money brings. Suppose you are poor: you need not be poor in soul, you need not be envious, you need not degrade yourselves in your attitude towards others. Be a man, no matter what you are, no matter where you are. There is no power in the universe, except the man himself, which can defeat the purpose and outcome of life. That is the Christian idea.

Jesus, then, would say, Live superior to all these things, and build up your soul in trust in God and love for man. Then, whether the world's fashion passes away or remains, no matter; you have earned and won your victory.



## VII

### THE DISCIPLE AND THE CHURCH





## VII

### THE DISCIPLE AND THE CHURCH

THE progress of the world has illustrated a sort of uneven and shifting balance between two extreme tendencies, one towards tyranny, the other towards anarchy. Men naturally organize themselves for any great purpose which they have in hand. They recognize the natural and necessary fact that together they can accomplish that which they are unable to do alone.

And yet, as we study carefully the purpose of organization, we find that it is for the sake of the individual; it is not for the sake of the organization. The thing that is desired by all intelligent persons is that the individual shall be protected, shall be guarded, and that opportunity shall be afforded him for developing into the finest and highest of which he is capable.

This development of the individual, then, is the ultimate end and aim. For it, all organization exists, or ought to exist; and, when organization forgets this and hinders the life and the growth of the individual, it has forfeited its right to exist, and must be replaced by some other type of association.

For the highest and finest organization, ultimately, is to be reached by the development of the individuals of which it is composed. Ultimately, do I say? In the end, in that far-off time of which we are able to dream, but which we cannot as yet see, organization may become unnecessary, and the principle of philosophical anarchy may assert itself. People who wish to do right need no law. Those who are desiring the finest and best things do not feel the touch or the pressure of any just statute. They keep within the limits of the right because they have no desire to do otherwise.

But one fact concerning organizations needs to be noted. We may take, for example, by way of illustration, political institutions, any form of government. When the government is established it has at its head an emperor, king, president, governor, — no matter what, — and it has officials of

all kinds; and the difficulty is, the practical difficulty, that these emperors, kings, governors, officials, shall come to imagine that the great thing for them to do is to guard and perfect and maintain the organization as if for its own sake.

As though a man, for example, should have some wonderful machinery, and spend all his time keeping it in order instead of manufacturing the things that it was intended to produce. As if a man who owns an automobile should all the time mend it and tinker it and watch it and guard it, and ride nowhere.

The tendency always is for the people who are set to oversee an organization to come to think that the organization and its maintenance are the great aims and objects of life. They forget that the organization exists for the sake of the individual, and that individual rights, individual opportunities, individual growth, are not to be sacrificed to the organization.

In more than half the world to-day the pressure of the government is felt to such an extent that the individual finds, if he thinks about it, that practically he has no rights, has little opportunity, almost no chance for personal development, for growth.

This same tendency illustrates itself in every department of life. There have, for example, been ages when there has been some great, overpowering artistic tendency. It had its own artistic standards; and any departure from those was regarded as of necessity something inferior and wrong; until, by and by, some great genius appeared who was able to strike out in some new direction, discarding all the traditions, and perhaps founding a school of his own, which in its turn became an agent of tyranny to others who wished to depart from the accepted standards.

The same is true in literature. The traditions of Queen Anne, finding their finest and completest expression perhaps in the poetry of Pope, were so regnant in England that, when Wordsworth appeared, there was no place for him. He did not conform to any of the ordinary literary standards of the time. He was misjudged, misrepresented, depreciated, until he forced himself by the power of his genius upon the attention of his age.

Let us see by two or three illustrations how this works in the religious realm. Socrates is, I suppose, admitted to have been the divinest man of his age, the most

humane, the noblest specimen of manhood that trod the streets of Athens; and yet there was no place for him to live. Why? Because he had outgrown the religious organizations, the ideals, the forms and rituals of the time. He was persecuted and put to death by religious organization and religious ritual. It was reverence for the gods on the part of the ignorant and bigoted and those incapable of any larger ideas that put to death the friend of God and the friend of his age, and the promise and prophecy of a new and higher religious development.

In religion, just the same as in any other department of life, this tendency to fixity of organization and stability of ritual appears. If some day you will read a book by a great French writer, De Coulanges, called "The Ancient City," you will find a flood of light thrown upon the origin and growth of religious organization and custom. He tells us that in the religion of the ancient city certain fixed forms of prayer and of ritual came to be so established that no one dared to touch or change them.) Certain phrases, certain words, for example, had come in some way to be regarded as sacred. They were written down, they were repeated year

after year, generation after generation ; they were supposed to have power over the gods, to win their favor, to gain their blessing ; and it was supposed to be impious to change a single word in these sacred formularies.

Not only that, but the priest, when he was going through his ritual, must stand in a particular posture ; he must pronounce his words with certain fixed intonations and inflections ; his gestures must be those which had come down from the past. Whatever was old was regarded as sacred ; and no one dared to touch or change it. He who was impious enough to do it was supposed to bring down the anger of the gods, not only upon himself, but upon the authorities of the city which permitted such a thing to be done.

And right in here is the root of persecution. People have persecuted in the past because they were afraid of the gods, or afraid of God,—afraid that he would be angry, not only with the one who dared to change the customs, but with the public authorities which allowed him to do it. So everything in the way of change has been rigorously suppressed.

Let us glance back for a moment along

the line of our own religious development; that is, the development of the Christian Church. Of course, it is the child of the Hebrew religion; and in this same Hebrew religion there were two classes that we need to note. On the one hand were the priests; on the other were the prophets. The priests were those who developed, organized, and guarded the traditions of the past, the laws of Moses, these laws including not only what were supposed to be moral teachings, but forms, ceremonies, customs of every kind. The priests devoted themselves to the organization and the ritual as though they were ends in themselves; it was their great business to keep these intact.

Who were the prophets? The prophets were the mouthpieces of the new life. They protested against the recognized and fixed forms that would keep the people from any new and finer development; they dared to say that they spoke some new word of God, as real, as true, as any that had been spoken to Moses; and so they protested against this fixity, and demanded room for the larger and growing life. And the entire history of the Hebrew people might well be summed up in the continuous conflict

between the traditionalists, represented by the priesthood, and the new life, finding utterance through the lips of the prophets.

For, when we come up to the time of Jesus, the great tragedy of his life was brought about as an incident in this age-long conflict. Jesus was put to death by what? Put to death by what at that time represented the Church,—the temple, the organization, the ritual,—because he spoke against them. Not that they were necessarily wrong in themselves, but he gave utterance to a larger thought than those old ideals were capable of holding. He said, God is too great, too universal, to be confined to Mount Gerizim or Mount Moriah. God is spirit, to be worshipped, therefore, by him who cares to worship him, in spirit and in truth.

And it was the rigor of the organization, devotion to the ritual, worship of the past, which hung the Nazarene on the tree, outside the city walls. He stood for liberty, for new thought, for a larger life, for a grander conception of God and man, for a nobler ideal and a more universal human hope.

But this same tendency took hold of the traditions concerning Jesus; and by the time



we come to the year 1000 or 1200, the Middle Ages, there is one of the hardest and most fixed and fast organizations on the face of the earth, representing, as it claims, the truth and the life of him who had broken the old organization for the sake of a growing humanity. So when Savonarola and Huss and Wiclif and Cranmer and Luther appeared at the time of the religious renaissance, the old organization in the name of God and the name of Christ is ready to do all it can to crush them out, to prevent the religious life of the world from coming to anything finer, larger, higher.

Luther represented the extreme of Protestantism. He defended the right of private judgment not only, but declared it to be a duty. He was no enemy of conformity in the sense of wishing to brush away all ceremonial, all custom. The principle for which he stood may well be illustrated by the attitude which he held towards Sunday. He said, "I advise you to keep Sunday; but, if anybody tells you that you must keep it, placing the command on any Jewish foundation, then I order you to break it in the assertion of your Christian liberty."

In other words, he placed the man before

the organization, the ritual, tradition, custom, and made these what they ought to be, servants of the life. But the followers of Luther have denied his spirit; and we have to-day in some parts of the world a Lutheranism which is as hard and fixed and fast and as anti-Luther as one could well imagine.

So by and by there comes the new development of liberalism, of which we Unitarians are representatives. But this same old tendency of human nature has always been at work, and I suppose always will be; and there are certain knots of Unitarians here and there, aided by certain outside critics, who wish to stand in the way of further growth, who have organized a "Channing Unitarianism." Channing, of all men! If they will only read and study the man, they will find that he stood ever facing the light, accepting, welcoming all new and higher and nobler growth.

Such, then, are the two tendencies; and such are some of their results. With these now in mind, let us a little more particularly consider the attitude which a true disciple of Jesus ought to maintain towards the Church, the Church as an organization, the

Church with its ceremonies and its forms. For all churches must have at least some organization, must have at least some ceremonies, some forms. The Quakers, the Friends, in spite of all their effort, do not quite escape this tendency.

The attitude of the disciple towards the Church, then.

First, he must believe in the Church. It is true that Jesus organized no church; he left no word or command in regard to organizing any church; but those who partook of the new spirit and life which he had brought into the world naturally came together; they organized as necessarily as the grass grows in the spring.

I believe that every man and every woman in the world ought to belong to some religious organization, ought to be affiliated with it so as to help it on in some way. Why? Because there is any Bible command to that effect? No, I care nothing about that at all. Because, by joining together, we can accomplish more; and it is our highest and most sacred duty to accomplish the most we can; because the Church is the one organization on the face of the earth, so far as I know, which has for its one

only end the development of the religious life, the bringing men into right relations to God and right relations with each other, the holding together mutually to build up the religious life within its own membership, and to spread the contagion of this life far and wide in the world. And because in this way we can do more for this grandest and noblest work in all the world, therefore we ought to organize.

But, if the Church ever gets to be regarded as an end in itself, if it stands in the way of that for which it was organized, then it must be opposed, then it must be modified. I believe in forms, ceremonies, rituals, — I care not how elaborate or how extensive they are, — provided they are vital expressions of life, provided they are real, provided they represent something, provided they help expand and develop the religious nature. But, when these forms and ceremonies get to be ends in themselves, then they are to be opposed, they are to be broken, as chains which hinder freedom to expand and grow.

There is nothing sacred in any form or ceremony that exists anywhere in all the world. Jesus ordered none of them. If you wish to regard his attitude, remember

that there is hardly one of them, Baptism, the Lord's Supper,—I speak of these as illustrations,—that originated in Christianity, or even among the Hebrews. They are as old as the religious history of the world, and sprang out of certain natural tendencies in human nature.

They are well if they serve. If they stand in the way, if they become hindrances, if they become substitutes for life, then they are to be brushed one side. And we know perfectly well that there are those in different churches over the world who hold these in higher esteem than they do the qualities of human nature which they are intended to develop.

For who have been the heretics of the world? They have been like the traitors, or those guilty of *lèse majesté*, as applied to the civil government. They have been men who have offended the organization. They have been men who have neglected the ritual. But no man who is an earnest seeker for truth, no matter what his present conviction or where to-day he may stand, can, by any possibility, be a heretic in the presence of the Nazarene ; for he died because he was a heretic both in belief and in prac-

tice; he died for the sake of the newer, larger thought, and the wider, nobler life of the world.

A man who in cowardliness conforms, a man who dare not in public speak the thing which he whispers to his friend in private, a man who knows, but never tells, a man who is unfaithful in his life, — these are the only real heretics in the presence of the great life and truth and love of Jesus.

Phillips Brooks is regarded as a good Churchman. In a volume of his called "Essays and Addresses" there is an article on Orthodoxy, in which he takes the ground that there can be no fixed and final statement of truth. I refer to him merely because he represents a Churchman's position.

Of course there can be no fixed or final statement of truth. In an infinite universe, in which man began in weakness and ignorance, and in which age after age he is growing and expanding a little and learning new truth, how can there be a fixed and final statement? There can be no infallible revelation of God except as fragment by fragment we are able to demonstrate that in this direction or that such or such a thing is true. The only revelation of God is truth;

and, just as fast and as far as we can see the truth and write it down, just so fast and so far does the real word of God get itself recorded.

“ God is not dumb, that he should speak no more ;  
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness  
And find'st not Sinai, 't is thy soul is poor ;  
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,  
Which whoso seeks shall find; but he who bends,  
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,  
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.

“ Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,  
And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone ;  
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,  
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.  
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,  
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,  
Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit.”

There can be, then, no heretic who is an earnest, simple seeker after God's truth, no matter which way he may be facing, nor where he may be to-day. If he is trying to find and follow the footsteps of God, he must be accepted of him, blessed by him. And if he is in the fellowship that God recognizes, what right has any human organization to put him beyond its pale?

Church organizers are sometimes like a

man who should have developed some beautiful specimens of the rose, and should prepare the soil for its growth, and build a fence around a large tract of this prepared soil and plant the seeds and rejoice in the opening of the flowers. But by and by the wind comes and catches some of the seeds, and carries them out into the wide fields. And the next year the man sees them growing there; and what does he do? Does he welcome them? Is he glad? No. When asked about it, he says: "They look just like those that I planted. They have the same tint, they have the same fragrance. In fact, I cannot tell the difference myself; but they must be evil because they did not grow inside the limits of the fence which I have set up."

This has been the historic and popular attitude of the Church towards all fine and beautiful facts in what is sometimes sneeringly called "all out of doors," — as though there were any all-out-of-doors that could get beyond the limits of the power and the love and the care of God.

The only heresy, then, ought to be dishonest thinking or dishonest living; for the Church exists, if it is true to its mission, to



make people true in thought and in life. Truth is the one great end, so far as the intellect is concerned. Love and service are the great ends, so far as practical life is concerned. The great danger in any particular age of the world is that we shall get to taking our religion at second-hand, that it shall become an echo, or an echo of an echo.

I think it was Mr. Beecher, some years ago, who said that no live, earnest, sensitive man would wish to go courting with his father's love-letters. If a little child sits in its mother's lap, and really loves the mother and feels the touch of her care, he will find some way, naturally and simply, to express himself. And that expression, however formless, is better than any most beautiful form of a past generation which the child is taught to memorize, and which is placed upon its lips, while, after all, it is not the living expression of the child's immediate love.

The times when the world has been most vital with religious life have been the times of its non-conformity. This is what the Reformation means, the breaking away from old standards and forms and ideals because the life was larger than they, and could no

more be confined within the old-time limits. This is what the movement of Wesley meant in the Church of England. It is what the development of the Puritan and Pilgrim ideals means, and which drew these men across the ocean to establish themselves on these new shores. And when the Puritans tried to fix an orthodoxy here the Pilgrims protested, and made a place of refuge for all earnest and honest thinkers, no matter how widely they might differ from each other. As Lowell has put it in one of his letters, whenever religion loses its real spirit and life, then it "begins to bedizen its exterior."

The times in the history of the world when the greatest emphasis has been placed on organization, forms, and ceremonies, have been the times of comparative dearth and deadness. When things are alive they grow, and break over barriers, and assume the form that is the expression of their own inner power.

We need, then, to cultivate this first-hand thought about religion. God is not a God who was alive once, two thousand years ago, or who spoke to Moses, or who appeared to Abraham. God is alive now. He is not a figure who appeared in certain places in the

world ages ago, so that those spots have become consecrated shrines. I am amazed at the blindness and traditionalism of people who will go to Palestine and hunt for sacred spots which to-day it is practically impossible for anybody accurately to identify, thinking they get close to God by so doing.

I have no objection, of course, to reverence for these places: I would like to visit them myself for the sake of old-time memories; but the thing I do object to is the idea that by doing this you can get close to God, when God is here, and you are close to him, if you will only open your eyes and see, if you will listen and hear, if you will only cultivate spiritual sensibility and feel.

God is here, in the growth, the development, the new life of the time. There is not a discovery, there is not an invention, there is not any one of the wonderful things that characterize this modern age, which is not a manifestation of the present life and thought and power and love of the God who is nearer to us than the breath we breathe. Let us come to him, then, first-hand.

Remember the truth which Walt Whitman voices so finely when he represents the child coming with handfuls of grass

and asking what it is ; and he tells him that it is a token of God, dropped so that we may pick it up and search for the initials, and ask, Whose? And he says, — I quote his thought, — Why should I try to find God any more than I find him to-day? God is leaving tokens of himself as I pass, everywhere in the street. I do not pick them up, I do not keep them ; for other tokens come to me at every turn ; I face them on every hand.

We need this kind of religion, which recognizes the present, living God, and which knows that he is speaking to us to-day. Where are his utterances? I love to believe that they are, some of them, in the writings of Paul, some of them in the Gospels, in the prophets, in the Psalms, in the old books of the Bible ; but they are also in Ruskin, in Emerson, in Lowell, in Whitman, — they are in any of these writers who are inspired to voice the highest religious thought and feeling of the age. God is speaking to us through these men just as truly as he spoke in the days of old.

We need, then, to cultivate this first-hand religion, and to remember that the Church as a religious organization exists

for the sake of developing this first-hand religion, leading us to God. I do not believe it is enough when the Church leads us to a shrine or to a saint or to Mary or even to Jesus. Jesus himself came to show us the Father, not that we should end in looking simply at him. The Father, the infinite, present, living, loving, speaking, leading God, is the one object of worship, the one end and aim of all our endeavor.

So, as the years go by, if we must build ourselves new structures, new organizations, as I suppose, human nature being what it is, we must, let us remember that they exist for the sake of the individual life; and let us, as fast as we can, outgrow them, leave them one side, and, if it must be, construct others that are more adequate.

This lesson is put into beautiful poetry in the "Chambered Nautilus" of Holmes:

"Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no  
more.

“Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap, forlorn!  
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!  
While on mine ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that  
sings : —

“Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea ! ”

The ideal, then, is a time when there will be no need of external law, or external form of any kind ; when the law will be written in the heart, and when we shall live out the divine life as naturally as we breathe, or as the blood flows in our veins.

That Church which has the least organization, and is the least bound by its creed, is not necessarily the farthest away from God. If it be true to its liberty, it ought to be nearer to God ; for when the scaffolding has done its work, then it may be taken down, leaving the beauty of the structure undefaced, unhidden by that which was only a means to an end.

## VIII

### THE WAY OF JESUS





## VIII

### THE WAY OF JESUS

THE method of the religious life is frequently spoken of as the "path," or the "way," the way out of evil into good, the way from self to God, the way from destruction to salvation, the way from sin to righteousness.

In the Acts of the Apostles Paul is represented as starting out on his persecuting tour, seeking after those of the "way," who followed the way of Jesus. In the old Testament we are told of a highway cast up, made so plain "that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Bunyan in his wonderful "Pilgrim's Progress" represents Christian as walking a road which leads from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City.

Let us, then, turn next to consider some of the principal steps that any man must naturally and necessarily take if he decides to follow Jesus; that is, to become one of

his disciples. If we shall find out that this way of Jesus, which he taught, which he illustrated, is the natural way for a true man, a true woman, to live, why, so much the better.

Religion is essentially a life, not a feeling, not a ritual, not a belief; it is a life. "Conduct is three-fourths of life," says Matthew Arnold.

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

So says Pope, in his "Essay on Man."

And yet we must not overlook two or three considerations. Religion is essentially life; but it is also feeling and ritual and creed, and none of these can be escaped. The point for us to note, however, is that feeling and the ritual and the creed are for the life,—not the life for them. If one does anything, he must have some form, some method of doing it, however simple; and if one ever acts it is under the impulse of feeling. Feeling, then, is the motive force of action, and so is of the most immediate and greatest importance. And the kind of feeling will naturally determine the kind of action.

So concerning the matter of belief. It is the fashion at the present time to decry belief, creeds, as being of no importance. "He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," — true; but he whose beliefs are wrong will be likely to be found acting wrongly before a great while; because ultimately it is the belief which determines the action, — not necessarily the belief which we formally profess, but the belief we really hold.

If I wish to get on the other side of a river in winter, my belief as to whether the ice is strong enough to hold me may become in the trial one of even vital importance. If I wish to take a train, and it is a matter of life or death that I reach a certain station at a certain time, my belief in the timetable may be a very vital matter indeed. If I am ill, the belief of the physician as to what is the matter with me and as to what is the best method of treatment to follow may be of the utmost consequence.

If a man believes that connection with a certain organization is more important than honesty, than conduct, than purity of life, it may make a great deal of difference in the outcome. If a man holds that accepting a

certain creed is the condition of salvation, and that, if he hold to the "form of sound words," the method of his life is of slight consequence, — will it make any difference?

Belief in the truth of things is of the utmost importance; and yet, it is a matter of emphasis; the belief is for the sake of action. And so it holds true that true religion is a life, a right life, a righteous life, a life in accord with the truth of God and the real relations in which we ought to stand to our fellow-men.

Now let us consider some of the steps that we ought to follow in leading this practical life. Prerequisite to the very first step, unless you choose to call it the first step, is faith. Faith is one of the best-abused words in the language. By faith is not meant a definite kind of belief in a doctrine.

Faith is one of the most simple and practical things in the world. The Bible says, "The just shall live by faith." It is equally true that the unjust live by faith. All men live by faith; they must perforce. Nine-tenths at least of the actions of every day on the part of all of us are taken on faith, a certain amount of trust.

We are very rarely certain of the outcome

of anything we undertake. We consider the whole matter in all its bearings, and we cast ourselves in practice upon a certain venture, determine to follow a certain way ; and we do it on faith.

We take a steamer for Europe. We have faith in the company, faith in the men who built the ship, faith in the captain and his crew, faith in the stability and general order of things. We do not know that we shall ever arrive at our port. We start out on faith. So of every railway train we take ; so of everything we do. And no matter whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, no matter what our course of conduct may be, we have to take a thousand things for granted, and test the matter by trial.

So, if a man decides to follow Jesus, to walk in his way, to lead the practical life of a disciple, it means simply that he makes up his mind that, on the whole, that is the wiser, the better thing, for him to do. He may not feel sure of the result of following Jesus ; and, so far as the practical outcome of it is concerned, it does not necessarily mean that he is settled in his mind as to his infallibility.

Suppose you are in the Adirondack wilder-

ness: you do not know anything about it, its devious pathways, its mountains, its woods, its lakes. You put yourself by faith into the hands of a guide: you are not sure that he knows his business, not certain as to his honesty; but you must be led by somebody, and you trust him. And, though he may seem bewildered sometimes, you know he knows more of woodcraft than you do; and you trust that he will lead you to a place of safety.

So we must make up our minds if we have any definite object in life to follow. We must make up our minds as to what that shall be. Are we after money? Do we care chiefly for pleasure? Do we desire literary fame? Do we very much desire political or social position or place? No matter what we want, we make up our minds to follow a certain definite line of action through life in the endeavor to attain the one thing which we chiefly desire; and we must do it by faith, — faith in ourselves, faith in the possibility of attainment, faith in the guidance and advice of those who have been over the way before us.

Now the faith that we are required to have in Jesus in order to become his dis-

ciples is just as simple, just as rational, just as natural, just as human as any of these other faiths.

People misuse this word "faith." It has nothing whatever to do with determining as to the nature of Jesus, or how he was born, or when he was born; as to any historic fact in the past; as to who wrote a book in the Bible; as to when it was written; as to whether it is infallible or not.

People generally speak of taking all these things "on faith;" but it is merely to talk nonsense to use language in that fashion. Questions of history or tradition, questions of criticism, are questions of fact, to be decided on the evidence, if we are honest and true with ourselves. But these practical matters of living are matters of faith, and must be. We determine to start out along this way; and we trust in the outcome.

Now what is the first step in the way of Jesus after this practical decision of faith? It is a word which perhaps we do not hear very much of in our Unitarian churches, perhaps not so much as we ought to: it is repentance. When John the Baptist came

preaching, the first thing he said was, "Repent." When Jesus took up his message, the first thing he said was, "Repent."

What did they mean? If we put into this word the natural, human meaning, we shall find that it has an application to us as real as it ever had among any religionists in the past. The Catholic Bible—that is, that English translation of the Bible which Catholics most affect—translates the Greek word "do penance." That is not what it means. Neither John the Baptist nor Jesus, nor any New Testament writer ever said anything about anybody's doing penance, making oneself voluntarily miserable in some way for the sake of a good supposed to result from it. That is not what repentance means.

As a boy, I was taught to believe that the essential thing in repentance was feeling badly, sorry, even to tears, if possible. And I remember, when I was trying to find the way of Jesus, that it grieved me more than anything else that I could not feel badly, as badly as I supposed I ought to, over my sins. But a careful study of the New Testament reveals the fact that the essential thing in repentance is not feeling badly at



all. You may or may not feel badly. That depends upon your sensitiveness, the way you look upon your past life.

What is it to repent? It means *change your purpose*.

You have been walking one way, going in one road,—in a road inconsistent with the way of Jesus, the way of truth, the way of love, the way of God, the way of unselfishness, the way of right. Change your purpose, and set your feet in this way; that is what repentance means.

If a man is very sensitive in his temperament, and if, as he looks back, he is conscious that he has been guilty of wrongs to his fellow-men, of wrongs to himself; if he has wasted and thrown away the better and nobler things in his life,—why, of course he will feel badly about it. But if he feels ever so badly about it and does not do anything, he does not repent; and, if he changes his purpose in accordance with the high and right and fine things, no matter about his feeling, he does repent.

As an illustration, consider the Prodigal Son. What was the essential thing with him? I should think from reading the story that he must have felt badly. It does

not say anything about his having shed any tears ; but, as he remembered that he had wronged his father, how foolish he had been, how he had wasted his property, thrown away his time, degraded himself by his vile associations, — as he thought over all that, it would have been very strange, indeed, if he had not felt badly.

But, if he had sat down in the far country, and simply felt badly to the end of his life, it would not have done him any good. The essential thing was that he arose and went to his father. How he felt about it can be left to take care of itself.

Repentance, then, is this practical thing, a perfectly natural thing, a perfectly human thing. If, as you think it over, you are conscious that you have been leading just the right kind of life, that you do not need to change your purpose, to set your feet in any other way, then you need not repent. You do not need to be born again if you were born rightly in the first place. But, if your life has been like mine, like that of most people, then if you simply, and in a manly way, make up your mind that henceforth you are going to follow in the way of Jesus, you will begin by repenting, by chang-

ing the purpose of your life and bringing it into accord with the divine.

The next step after repentance is what? It is forgiveness. And here, again, we need to clear away misconceptions as to the nature of forgiveness. One trouble I find with the accepted beliefs of the old churches is — at any rate, as it is popularly interpreted — that the past can be all wiped away by forgiveness. The impression frequently made on unthinking people by the story of the penitent thief on the cross is that he was forgiven, and ushered straight into paradise, and that being there, on the right side of the gate when it was closed, he was as well off as anybody.

But does forgiveness do anything of the kind? Forgiveness never changed a past fact. Forgiveness never prevented the working out of the natural and necessary result of any broken law. The past remains, however much you are forgiven. The injury you have done other people is there. It stands. You cannot touch it. You may possibly make partial reparation; but, if you have led somebody out of the right way into the wrong, your repenting does not touch the fact that that person is still walking this wrong way, and may walk it, so far as we can see, to the end.

You have injured some person so that his life is broken. It is a failure, practically. It is ruined. Because God forgives you, is that wiped out? No. It stands.

You have wounded your own life: you have injured yourself, as every man must who does wrong. Does being forgiven change that? No. The past is past, and irreparable. We can begin over again. In the light of the past we can make the future what it ought to be. We may even climb

“ on stepping-stones  
Of our dead selves to higher things.”

But the stepping-stones of the dead selves are there, and so much is thrown away. Forgiveness does not mean wiping out the past and making things just as though they had never been.

And follow the penitent thief, if you will, into paradise. Where does he start? He starts where he begins, as a penitent thief. He is the result of all the years of his wasted and criminal life. He is so much behind what he might have been; and it may take him ages to catch up again. This let us never forget.

Forgiveness does not wipe out the past;

but it brings us into tender, trustful, personal relationship with God so that we have new heart and new courage, and may begin where we are and henceforth climb toward the heights that lead up to the best and the noblest.

But there are two sides to forgiveness ; and we need to note the other side for a moment. Did you ever consider the significance of that phrase in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"? And Jesus comments on this idea after the prayer is finished, and says, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you ; but, if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

Now we need to note that this is not an arbitrary thing. God does not withhold forgiveness from a man because he wants to. So long as he is unforgiving himself, God cannot forgive a man. Forgiveness is two-sided. One side reaches from you to God, and the other side reaches from you to your fellows ; and the two go together. This is a condition of the heart and life.

A forgiven unforgiving man is as necessarily a contradiction in terms as is cold fire,

or hot ice, or white blackness. It is not a matter for power. It is not a matter for love even. God cannot forgive us except as along with that goes forgiveness on our part for all who we think have wronged us.

In another place Jesus touches this same great truth. He says, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift, go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." In other words, we simply cannot approach God except through right relations to our fellow-men; because approaching God is a moral and spiritual thing, and we must be in this moral and spiritual attitude towards our fellow-men before we can be conscious of the love and life of God.

We can be forgiven, then, not in the sense of having the past wiped out, but in being reconciled to God, having atonement — at-one-ment — wrought, so that henceforth we do not carry the burden of feeling that we are struggling against the Infinite, who must of necessity be opposed to us. The Father becomes a loving friend, and all the more loving, we may say, because of our sin and our need. Just as a father or

mother loves with peculiar tenderness a crippled or perhaps half mentally developed child, loves with a yearning tenderness and pity ; so God loves us when we have been astray, loves us with that power, that sweetness that would win us back again, loves us not so much because we are lovable as because our need is great.

Now the next characteristic of this life is that which Jesus had in mind when, in his figurative language, he said we were not to lay up our treasures on earth, but in heaven. What here did Jesus mean? He meant the most reasonable, human, beautiful thing in all the world. The one who will follow Jesus must make the spiritual life, the mental, the moral life, the one great thing ; and all others must be subordinated to it. He must lay the emphasis on this.

Now to illustrate. Suppose a man is rich : if he is walking in the way of Jesus, the end and aim of his life will not be his riches ; they will be raw material, which he can transmute into spiritual wealth ; that is, into love, tenderness, pity, service, help.

Suppose a man is poor : he will not spend his life bemoaning that fact. Because his means are limited, he will make this life

of struggle and deprivation again raw material, that he can transmute into sympathy, pity, tenderness, spiritual life. It is this which Browning had in mind, when he said that the great thing is the "development of a soul." All life is for this, if you see clearly and are trying to walk in the way of Jesus.

Suppose we are lifted into some high position because we have shown marked ability. Jesus said the way of the Gentiles has been that people holding these positions use them as means for personal gratification. They use this power to exploit their fellows; but he says, "It is not to be so among you." The great man becomes greatest of all because he serves, because he devotes himself to the highest and best things.

This is Washington's birthday. When we think of Washington we do not think chiefly of his being a rich man, though he was; or of his being merely a great man, though he was. Washington used his money and his ability, all his powers of every kind, for service, transmuted them into spiritual qualities. In the figurative language of Jesus, he laid up his treasure, not where moth and rust can corrupt, where thieves



can break through and steal, but in heaven, beyond the reach of time and change. The wealth, the power, the character, of Washington was not perishable. There is nothing in it that can ever pass away.

Suppose we are obscure: instead of having ten talents or even five, we have only one. We may use this obscurity as a means of cultivating our spiritual nature, making ourselves noble and true, patient, simple, able to sympathize with others who are obscure. That is, let us be men, be divine in being men, wherever we are, whatever we are. This is the way of Jesus. Is it not the rational way for a man, for a woman, to live?

Suppose we love art: let not art dominate us. Use art as a man; make it minister to the world's beauty, the world's joy, the world's good. Suppose we have literary power: do not let it turn us into a book. Let us be men, and use books; transmute the literature of the world into spiritual qualities, into character. Suppose we love music: one is not to be merely a musician. Be a man first, and use the magic of music to delight the world and to minister to the highest and finest things in the world.

This is the way of Jesus. He would say, Be a man, be a woman; and wherever you are, whatever your conditions, whatever your possessions, let them all be secondary, and make them build up your manhood or your womanhood. This is a thing that this age needs to learn, with its extremes of poverty and of wealth, with its jealousies, its bitterness, its heartaches, its longings. It needs to learn that there is no power in the universe, except in the man himself, that can make his life a failure. That is absolutely true. God is on our side: the laws, the forces of the universe, are on our side; and, if we choose, we can make them our servants, make them help us.

No man need to let conditions make him sour and narrow and bitter and mean because he cannot have his way. Be of the essential qualities of sweetness yourself, and like the rose, or an apple in its ripening, whatever your conditions, you will extract beauty and sweetness from them, and grow ripe, (and not rotten.) This is the power which God has enthroned in every soul.

This leads us to consider the next step; and that is sacrifice. Jesus said: If you wish to follow me, take up the cross daily,

sacrifice yourself for my sake. He that gains his life will lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake will find it.

Lowell, in his poem of "Sir Launfal," has sung:—

"At the devil's booth are all things sold,  
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;  
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking:  
'T is heaven alone that is given away,  
'T is only God may be had for the asking.  
No price is set on the lavish summer;  
June may be had by the poorest comer."

I agree with a part of Lowell's teaching; with the other part I disagree. At the devil's booth all things are sold. At God's booth, too, all things are sold. The Christian leads a life of sacrifice. The sinner leads a life of sacrifice. Every man leads a life of sacrifice. Every man must. In other words, we cannot do everything, we cannot have everything, we cannot enjoy everything. We must choose, and, for the sake of that choice, pay the price of the rest; that is, sacrifice the rest. That is the universal law. The law of sacrifice is a law of life, that is all; and there is no more sacrifice about a Christian life than

there is about any other, — only, in other lives we sacrifice good things for the sake of bad things, and in the Christian life we never have to sacrifice anything that is really worth keeping.

If a boy grows up to be a man, he must sacrifice the freedom and delights and joys of his boyhood in the process. If you take a wild Indian of the plains and ask him to become civilized, he must give up his free and irresponsible life. If a young man is to go into business and win success he must sacrifice a good many amusements, — whatever stands in the way of that success. As Milton sang a good many years ago, he who will win any great height must

“Scorn delights and live laborious days.”

If a man is to make a financial success in the world, he must give up certain other things. If he is to gain a literary success, the same is true. No matter what kind of a life we decide to lead, we must pay the price of it. If we decide to lead a good life, the only things we pay are bad things. But if we decide to lead a bad life, we have got to pay a great price of good things. So it is a life of sacrifice, whichever way we take.

I do not believe in people's voluntarily assuming burdens. A great many people, when the season of Lent comes around, while they have been living a life perhaps of pure self-indulgence all the rest of the year, determine, as though it were a merit, to go without eating certain things for forty days, to do without going to places of amusement for forty days, doing this or refraining from that for forty days. All this is pure artifice, trying to fool ourselves with superficial matters while we fail to see the essential, pure, open, eternal truths of life.

God does not ask us voluntarily to make ourselves miserable. We shall have all the occasion we need, if we are true to ourselves, when the hour of temptation comes and the stress of life faces us. We do not need to go out of our way to invent things with which to torment our souls. Let us be true to the highest things in us, and sacrifice whatever stands in the way of that; that is the Christian law of sacrifice.

Walk this road, and give up the joy of wandering off into side paths that lead nowhere in particular; give up rest and leisure that you might have if you did not lead this

life of help and service; give yourselves to God; be a man, and pay the price of it; that is the Christian law of sacrifice.

Now one other point only; and this is not so much the last step (it is the last if we look at the order of values and consider it the climax) as it is that which ought to permeate and cover and clothe the life all the way through,—the essential thing in following Jesus is that we should love.

What does love mean? Love is not merely a passion; it is not merely an emotion. Perhaps we get the finest interpretation when we remember that the New Testament says that "God is love."

What constitutes the sun what it is? The fact of its universal, eternal, spontaneous, generous giving of itself, to good, to bad, to beauty, to ugliness, to sweetness, to filth, to mountain-peaks, to gutters. The sun gives itself, beautifies, glorifies, cleanses, transmutes all.

In this sense God is love; and the essential thing in his nature is that God is the universal giver of himself, pouring out his infinite nature upon all things that are, not upon the good people only, but upon the bad people, as he sends his rain on the just

and on the unjust. God includes all things in this love.

So if we love, try to be like the Father, try to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we shall love God, first, as the infinite ideal of all that is beautiful and good and fair; we shall love our friends, those that love us; we shall love kindred spirits, those whom we delight to have as our companions; we shall love people who are not lovely, love them with a yearning tenderness that seeks to serve, that pities them because they are not lovely.

Let us remember that prayer, — one of the sweetest and finest things I know of, — “God bless the wicked; the good thou hast already sufficiently blessed in making them good.” That is the spirit we should cultivate as we look out over the world, — love the unlovely, believing that God has not created one soul without placing in the centre of it somewhere the germ of infinitely divine possibilities; love it for the sake of that, surround it with love, as the sun surrounds a dead tree, or one apparently dead, in the spring, bathing it with its light and its warmth, until the hard, rough bark bursts and the buds appear, and leaves

and flowers follow, covering it with beauty and glory.

So love the unlovely, the rugged, the gnarled, the ugly, the coarse human beings; be like the Father in loving; love for the sake of developing and unfolding all these divine and sweet and high possibilities in their nature.

We must love our enemies. Is that a hard saying? If you have an enemy, it is because you have done something to create that enmity, or he thinks you have. If you have, love him as one you have injured, and try to make reparation. If he thinks you have, do not hate him for it; he is more to be pitied than you are. You pity a man with a broken arm, or a twisted leg, or with an imperfect development of the brain, or who is deaf, or who is blind. Cannot you pity morally twisted, broken, and deformed lives? cannot you pity morally deaf and blind people? can you not pity them just because they are so unhappy, because they need so much to find out the truth and the way, and to be delivered from these evil conditions?

This is the divine way of loving: love all souls that exist. Love them until you become so divine that you cannot believe in



the possibility of any single soul in all the universe being forgotten, or finally left marred and broken when, as Tennyson says, —

“God hath made the pile complete.”

One of the sweetest bits of religion in any literature or Bible of all the world is this sentence. It is Buddhist, from a Chinese liturgy : “Never will I seek or receive private, individual salvation, never will I enter into final peace alone ; but forever and ever and everywhere I will live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature throughout all the worlds.”

That is divine love ; that is divine pity ; that it is which heals, which saves, which redeems, which lifts up even to the uttermost.

If we walk the way of Jesus, we shall love men as he loved, praying for our enemies if need be with our last breath, as he prayed for his, loving until we compel all things to take on the character and drink in the spirit of that love.



## IX

# THE ORIGINALITY OF JESUS



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FROM the point of view of the older beliefs, our present discussion would have no relevancy. According to that, it is of no special consequence as to whether or not Jesus taught anything new, or made any remarkable intellectual or even moral contribution to the thought or the life of the world; for he did not come into the world to teach, primarily. He came to suffer and to die. He came to be a sacrifice, so that he might fulfil some great exigency, and be the means of saving souls from eternal punishment in the next world. That has been the predominant teaching in the past.

There has, however, been no consensus of opinion during the last eighteen or nineteen hundred years as to the special meaning of this suffering and death. For a long time in the early Church it was believed that, through the fall of man, all souls had come to be the lawful subjects of Satan; that they

were his; that he was their king, and had a right to dispose of them as he would. It was supposed, therefore, that Jesus suffered and died that he might purchase a certain number of human souls from the authority of the evil one, and bring them under his own kingship, redeem and save them.

Though not taught clearly anywhere in the Bible, it was traditionally held that Jesus had been the great rival of Satan in heaven before the world was created, and that it was through the agency of Jesus that he and his followers had been cast out. The enmity, then, of Satan was special and peculiar against him; and he was willing to accept his sufferings and death as a price for the redemption of a certain number of human souls. This for a long time was supposed to be the meaning of the sufferings and the death of the Nazarene.

At a later time it was believed that there was some sort of exigency in the government of God that needed to be met in this way. Law had been broken. The authority of law must be maintained. Somebody must suffer. Jesus comes forward as a voluntary victim, suffers in the stead of men, and so meets this great governmental diffi-

culty, and enables God to be just and at the same time the justifier of those that believe in Jesus. This was another theory.

Another was that Jesus was an expiation, that he suffered to appease the wrath of the Almighty, to deliver men from God's anger.

Still another, which has been very popular until within the last century, and is in many quarters still, has been called the substitution theory. Jesus' sufferings and death were substituted for the sufferings and the death of men; and those who believed on him could have so much as was necessary of the pain of Christ credited, so to speak, to them, transferred to their account, and so they go free.

The most popular theory at present, in those older churches which are being touched by the spirit of the modern world, is what has come to be called the moral view of the atonement. Its most distinguished champion was Dr. Bushnell, of Hartford. According to this, Satan has little to do with it. It is not to appease God's anger; it is not to meet any governmental exigency; it is not for any of these old reasons; but Jesus comes into the world willing to suffer

and die, and so manifest to men the eternal and changeless love of the Father. And by this manifestation he is supposed to win men away from their sin and rebellion, and bring them back in loving loyalty to the government of the Father.

These modern views would consist to a certain extent with a discussion as to the question of the originality of Jesus. The older views, as I have said, would not. There is a great change passing over all the different branches of the Church at the present time; even those which are hardly conscious of it are feeling it. To see how thoroughly humanitarian are some of the utterances to be found, we need only to keep in touch with current religious life as reported in the daily papers.

There was a large meeting at Stanford University in California just a little while ago, under the management of our old New York friend, Dr. Heber Newton, who was then the minister of the chapel at Stanford. He is represented on this occasion as having said that Christianity is not exclusive, but inclusive, of all religions, and as holding that all men who are true and fine and noble anywhere on the face of the earth are



complying with the essential things which are necessary for one to become a Christian.

A few days ago in this city, speaking to a Sunday night audience at Cooper Union, Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbot is reported to have said that a Catholic or a Protestant, a Jew or a Christian, so long as he does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God, will be sure to be saved.

According to this, any man anywhere in the world who loves God, walks humbly before him, and tries to do justly, is a Christian.

Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, is reported to have said that a Christian is simply a pure, honest, unselfish man. Of course, if this is true, then a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, a Confucian, or an atheist, may be a Christian.

Such words as these indicate the broader drift of thought in some of those churches which do not take the name of Liberal.

On the contrary, to show that these men are not having it all their own way, Bishop Huntington, of the Episcopal Church, has recently preached, reasserting the old doctrines of eternal hell and claiming that they are taught by the words and maintained by

the authority of Jesus. And Captain A. T. Mahan, in addressing the Church Club, thought that the churches were departing from their original, essential purpose by becoming so thoroughly humanitarian. The great thing, he said, which they were in existence for was to save souls, to bring individual souls to be laid as a sacrifice at the feet of him who came into the world to suffer and die to save them.

I have a good deal of sympathy with a certain aspect of the captain's teaching. I think myself that, while humanitarianism, in its practical sense of helping people in this world, is one of the magnificent fruits of Christianity, and ought to be one of the grandest activities of every Christian church, yet the Church does exist primarily for something deeper and higher than that. That something else is the root, however much of the flower and fruitage of human service the tree may produce when this root is properly fed and cultivated.

Of course, those who are taking the broader and more humane outlook over the world are intensely interested in the practical question which we are now to consider,—the originality of Jesus. Did he

come into the world merely to suffer and die, and is it of no consequence what he contributed in the way of thinking or living to our life here, or are we right when we believe that he died under the influence of the same natural law which has been illustrated in the martyrdoms of all true and noble men who have devoted themselves to truth and the higher life of the world? Believing that, we are ready to raise the question as to what Jesus taught and gave the world which was peculiar to himself.

In the first place, let us glance negatively at two or three matters which are sometimes thought of as special contributions of Jesus, but which can be traced far back of his time. The method of Jesus' teaching, the method of his living, — these were not new. It was common in Oriental lands for a man to gather a group of friends or disciples unto him, to travel from place to place, to depend for support upon the sympathy and kindness of friends by the way, to teach his doctrines sitting upon the edge of a well, or in a boat by the lake border, or on the side of a mountain, or passing along the country roads, — wherever he found some one interested and caring. But still it is true that

the parables of Jesus are supreme in their simplicity and beauty.

Neither was the method of teaching by parable, which is so conspicuous in the life of Jesus, peculiar to him. Gautama, the Buddha, taught by parable five hundred years before his time.

The great saying of Jesus as to that which is the central idea of the law was not original with him. Frequently people are found who suppose that he was the first one who said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

A few years before Jesus was born, however, there were two great teachers in Jerusalem. One was Gamaliel, who afterwards was the master of Paul, at whose feet he sat and learned the law. He believed in and laid great stress upon the traditions as well as the actual teachings of the Mosaic law.

There was at the same time another teacher, by the name of Hillel, who was more like Jesus himself, caring less for form and ritual,

—concentrating his thought on those things which he deemed essential.

The story goes that a visitor in Jerusalem, on a certain occasion, went to Gamaliel and asked him if he could teach him the whole law while he stood on one foot. The teacher was indignant at what he regarded as a preposterous request, and turned the stranger from his door. Then he went over to the school of Hillel, and asked the master there the same question. Hillel replied, "Certainly, nothing is easier. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. This," he added, "is the whole law; all the rest is commentary."

So you see that this grand truth was not original, in the ordinary sense of the word, with Jesus. Neither was Jesus the first one who said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." There are many Hebrews who think that the Christian world has misrepresented them in saying that they taught, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." Whatever may have been the predominant feeling of the ancient world, this is not true. It is, indeed, true that, until a comparatively modern time, it has

been considered a virtue to hate beyond the limits of your own neighborhood, your own family, or, at any rate, your own people or race.

Plato could commend an Athenian because he hated Sparta; and, even as late as the time of the naval hero Nelson, in England it was regarded as the prime virtue of an Englishman that he hated a Frenchman as he did the evil one.

So it is true that this divided state of mind has been a common one, not only in the ancient world, but in the modern; and yet I love to remember that, away back in the time when the Book of Leviticus was written (you will find it in the nineteenth chapter and thirty-fourth verse), there was a command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

One other point negatively: neither was Jesus the author of the Golden Rule. Sometimes we say that it sums up and contains in itself the essence of Christianity. In one sense this is true; and yet, hundreds of years before Jesus, Confucius taught it. When some one asked him if there was any one word in which he could convey the great lesson of life, he said, "Is not reciproc-

ity such a word? What you would not have others do to you, do not you to them." In many parts of the world substantially the same teaching can be found.

And yet, do not think that anything is to be taken away from the glory, the power, the beauty of Jesus, either as to his teaching, his character, or his influence. Is it not true that all the great men of the world have summed up in themselves all the attainments of humanity up to their time, and then have taken some grand step forward, so that the world has been greater for their having lived in it than it ever was before? There were evolutionists before Spencer and Darwin. To those two men, and to Spencer first, we owe the great modern movement which is revolutionizing human thought; but others caught glimpses of the same idea, — such men as Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Goethe, Swedenborg, and Erasmus Darwin. What Darwin and Spencer did was to put their fingers on true, real causes which were at work bringing about these transitions and transformations. That is their glory.

So it is never derogatory to Jesus that there may have been glimpses and gleams here

and there of the morning of religious civilization, which he at last ushered in with such glory, such brightness, and such power.

Notice now a few specific things which Jesus has contributed to the life of the world. And, first, he has put new and deeper and higher and finer and sweeter meaning into a belief which in some form existed before, — the Fatherhood of God.

I am glad to remember — and it takes nothing away from Jesus — that Father in heaven, or Heaven-Father, is one of the oldest names for God to be found anywhere in the history of human thought. Away far in the East, at the beginning of those wonderful religions of India, we find certain Sanskrit hymns. We can see the religions growing, taking shape. There the name, or one of the names, for God is *Dyaus-Pitar*, Heaven-Father. It is the same name which in Latin became Jupiter; for the old Latins said that Jupiter was the father of gods and of men; but then it did not mean what it has meant since the time of Jesus.

There were sweeter things than could be found in India or in Rome among those wonderful old prophetic writers who gave us foregleams and far-off glimpses of what we



now call Christianity. In the Old Testament God is sometimes represented in the most tender way in the world as our Father; and he asks pathetically, or is represented as asking, "If I be a father, where is my honor?" — why do you not treat me as a father? And then, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." He will not be too exacting with us; he knows how weak we are.

So those old prophets felt and said. But since Jesus lived and spoke of his Father in heaven it has had a newer and tenderer meaning for all human hearts that have sat at his feet and learned the lessons that he was fitted to teach. He is not merely now the Author of our being, not merely the Creator of the world, of animals and of man, the Father of races or of humanity. If we catch the true meaning of the teaching of Jesus, then he is my Father. I have a right to feel that he thinks of and cares for just me, — not for the whole family in the mass, but he knows my life, and all my peculiarities and weaknesses and burdens and sorrows and troubles; and I can go to him with them,

not expecting him to change his world on my account, but expecting that I can feel under me his hand and folded around me the everlasting arms.

So Jesus contributed to the world a new, grander, deeper, higher, tenderer conception of human childhood and divine Fatherhood.

In the next place, he was not the first one who talked about human brotherhood. An old Roman playwright has said, "I am a man, and whatever is human concerns me." But that was not the ordinary attitude of the antique world. The proud Greek, standing in the midst of the marvellous civilization which he had created, looked out over the rest of the world, and called them all Barbarians. They were not the equals of the Greek.

So the average attitude of the Hebrew was one of Hebrew superiority and Hebrew condescension as he looked over the world upon those that he called the Gentiles. Indeed, we have not yet anywhere reached the height and the breadth of the teaching of Jesus.

He taught that one is our Father in heaven, and all we are brethren. He taught that we were not to be high and low, superior

and inferior, but all equally children of the one Father. And, when Christianity started out on its career of conquest, it did more than had ever been done in the history of the world up to that time to realize this ideal.

Paul taught that there was one humanity in Christ, — that whether you were rich or poor made no difference, whether you were a slave or free made no difference, whether you were Barbarian or Greek or Parthian made no difference, whether man or woman, no difference. All are one in Christ. That was the teaching of Paul. I do not mean to say that his followers lived it out.

And the Catholic Church has always held up before the world one grand assertion and illustration of this fundamental truth that Jesus so grandly taught. I know that the Church has a thousand times allied itself with the great. It has been tyrannous, it has been cruel, it has favored the rich, it has violated this teaching of Jesus in almost every possible direction; but one thing it has always asserted before the world, — any base-born peasant, no matter from what grade of life, however poor, by right of character and ability, was able to become pope, the head of the Church.

And that meant what? It meant that emperors, kings, nobles, the proud, the haughty, the rich,—all those occupying the high places of the world,—must bow the knee in utter prostration and humility before simply a man of no birth, no rank, no money,—only a man. And so, if even unconsciously, it has taught this great truth which is central in Christianity.

Another thing which Jesus added to the world was his teaching of the infinite worth of a human soul. In all the old-time civilizations a few select men have been important; but the great masses of the people have been of no account except to be exploited by the great, to be servants, to be slaves, to be food for their ambitions, to make up their armies, to be harnessed as millions to their industrial engagements and occupations,—thousands and thousands of them sacrificed in every direction, swept aside as though they were so many flies.

This has been the attitude too many times towards the world's great, toiling, common masses. But Jesus taught that any human soul, in any grade or rank of life, was of more value than the whole world,—of infinite worth. He said, He

that gains the whole world and loses his soul makes a very bad trade, a poor bargain.

And the logical outcome of that in practical life, — what does it mean? It means this conspicuous fact which Captain Mahan was criticising the other night before the Church Club: that the Church, as it has developed and unfolded the life and ideals of Jesus, has become so humanitarian that it regards the condition and the needs of the humble, the vicious, the criminal, the outcast, the poorest everywhere, and measures its Christian vitality by the standard as to what it is thinking of and doing for these that need.

We are coming to think that we ought to pray chiefly for these. As some one has said, — and as has been already quoted — “God bless the wicked; the good he has already sufficiently blessed by making them good.” And so Christianity is a missionary religion. Christianity cares for the slave, for the outcast, for the poorest, for those in prison, for any one that is human anywhere.

Another thing Jesus teaches as it has never been taught anywhere else in the history of the world, — the greatness of service. He says distinctly and definitely

that this has not been the dominant idea among the nations. The great ones there have been set on high. They have exercised authority over the people. They have used the people for their own behoof, for their own advantage; but it shall not be so in this kingdom which I have come to establish. He that is greatest shall be the one who serves the most; and even the giving of a cup of cold water is more than all dignified ceremony and all righteous pretence.

Indeed, Jesus here put his finger on an essential and eternal law of the universe. He was announcing something which was new in the thought of men, but which was as old as the nature of God; for God himself is God because he pours himself out in infinite giving, with utter *abandon*, to constitute the life of the universe.

He is the eternal and universal servant; not a servant of the archangels only, not a servant of famous men only,—the servant of the poor, the servant of every bird that flies in the air and every beast that seeks its food from God; the servant of every tree, of every shrub, of every unfolding leaf, of every drop of water,—God, the infinite

God, engaged forever in serving the life and the beauty of all these.

Jesus, then, here put his finger on an eternal and universal truth of the universe; and, as we look back and down the ages up which humanity has climbed so slowly, we are beginning to justify that saying, we are beginning to recognize that they only are worthy of honor, they only are truly great, who have served and helped the world.

And Jesus taught another great, deep, eternal principle,—that we grow, that we gain, that we become, by throwing ourselves away. The self-seeker, in the light of the great truths of Jesus, we find to be, what Jesus called one of them, a fool. Not in any bitter way. We remember the case of the man who was getting so rich he did not know what to do with his property, and said: I shall have to tear down my barns, and build larger ones, so that I may have a place to bestow my goods. Jesus said: "Thou fool!" Poor, pitiful fool, thinking you can get the wealth and the greatness of life by grasping!

We get the wealth and greatness of life by giving, and only by giving. All the spiritual qualities, all the noble things of

the world, are those which can be developed only by giving them away, — intelligence, love, pity, helpfulness, — all the finer qualities. Since God is the everlasting giver, the eternal servant, all the divine things can be gained by man not in any selfish way. He only fools himself if he thinks he can get rich in that fashion. It will come only as he gives.

Another thing Jesus taught, — the perfectibility of the common man, of all individual men. He set no low standard. Men sometimes say: Well, if I try to do about right, I imagine I shall get along. I shall do as well as the majority. What did Jesus say? “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Perfection for every individual — the one standard of life according to the teaching of Jesus. And he believed it; and that means what? It means the coming of the kingdom of God right here on earth. Jesus taught it. He believed that here was the place where God was to abide among his people. No matter at all to-day as to whether the framework of Jesus’ thought was such as we continue to hold. Let us fix our attention on that which is essential;



that is, that man is capable of living a god-like life. He is capable of using his body in a divine way. He is capable of using his mind simply for the sake of finding the truth, which is what it is for, not as the haunt and resting-place of prejudices and preconceptions. He is capable of welcoming to his heart all that is lovely and of good report. He is capable of linking himself spiritually with the Father of all souls.

And no man has any right to do just about as well as he can, and be contented with that. No man has any right to look indulgently into his own character, and make allowance for any sort of imperfection. Perfection is not, rightly considered, a tasteless, meaningless thing. It is the harmony, the completion, the perfection of life, weaving into it all its beauty, all its glory, all that makes it divine.

One point more. It is said in the New Testament in one place that Jesus "brought life and immortality to light." We cannot agree with the writer if he meant that the world had had no belief in a future life before; for we know now that there never has been a tribe on earth which did not have some sort of belief in continued existence

after death. It has been the dream of the human heart. It has been the one thing concerning which you can say that it has been believed always, by all men, everywhere.

But Jesus did put a new and higher meaning into it. He taught that this universe was the one house of the Father, that it had a good many different rooms in it, and that those that were in the spiritual life were simply in another room of the Father's house, and that they were living as really as we.

He taught or, rather, assumed the existence of the individual personality. I for one have no sort of interest in the kind of immortality that a great many persons talk about,—the immortality of influence, for example. I should like to help the world for a little while; but suppose the world is going to live for a million years, and then tumble into nothing. I cannot get very much interested in that kind of outlook.

Immortality by being absorbed into the Infinite, and losing personal consciousness, I do not care for. On those terms, it means nothing to me. Immortality that shall shut the door of this life as I go out, and shut at the same time my personal memories and

interests, I do not want. I would not turn my hand over for it.

Immortality on any of these terms does not appeal to me; but, if I can go out just myself, remembering and loving and hoping, go out to find those I have remembered and loved so that this common world shall find continuity over there, — then there is something to put meaning into life, something to uplift and glorify the highest and sweetest hopes of the world. This is essentially, I think, the teaching of Jesus.

But, at the close, there is something else he gave the world, in some ways better than all his teaching; and that is himself. Jesus was a good deal more than anything he said. He was a good deal more than anything he did. And it is really to-day that which Jesus was, or which we think he was, which is the richest possession of the race.

I do not know to what an extent we have idealized him; neither do I care very much. He has come to be our human ideal of all that is fairest and most divine; and we look to him for hint, for example, as to the relationship in which we shall stand to other people.

What did Jesus do towards the rich?

what did Jesus do in his attitude towards the poor? what did he do towards the sinning? Infinite tenderness towards repentant weakness and sin. The only time that he flashed out into anger, cutting like lightning with his words, was when he was dealing with respectable, conceited hypocrisy. Always affectionately tender towards the weak. What was his attitude towards the Father? How did he meet suffering? How did he meet the darkness that swept down upon him and sometimes hid from him even the face of the Father? What did he do with his enemies,—those who misunderstood him, and were bitter against him, because they did not know him? What did he do at the last when, hanging on the cross, he commended his spirit into the hands of Him from whom he had come?

Jesus, I say, stands in all these different relations of life as our ideal. Have we caught up with it? I have no objections to people talking about other teachers, other masters. There are many who have lived and taught in the world that I would bow in the presence of as teacher and master; but Jesus is supreme. He is still the star of humanity's morning, gleaming there away

towards our east, where the first rays of the sun are beginning to redden with the promise of the dawn.

Is this world old, decrepit, hastening to decay? No. We are just beginning to be civilized, a little, in places, here and there. It is the morning we look towards; and Jesus is still our morning star. We look towards him for light; we travel towards him when we travel towards the best; and when we are able to live out that which he taught and which he was, then the kingdom of God will have come.



X

JESUS AND THE SPIRIT WORLD





## X

### JESUS AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

It is not an argument nor a criticism which I now have in mind so much as it is an exposition. I wish to set forth, simply as I may, what I conceive to have been the beliefs of Jesus concerning, and his attitude towards, the spiritual world.

It is of no practical importance as to whether we should be able to-day to state our beliefs as he stated his. We shall find that he gave us, or gave his disciples rather, no deliberate or special teaching on the subject. Whatever we can gather is purely by way of inference from incidental statements. He seems to have assumed the whole great subject, to have had a general belief back of all that he did and all that he said, but never to have entered upon any description or defence of that belief.

Unless we find some word to the contrary, — and I do not know of any such, — I think we are justified in assuming that the general

theories of the universe which were prevalent among his people and at his time were those which he held; and so different were they from those which are common at the present time that, in order to have any kind of picture of his world, we shall need to remind ourselves of a few of the main points concerning it.

The universe as believed in two thousand years ago was comparatively a very small affair. It was not nearly so large as our present conception of our solar system, perhaps not larger than the orbit of the moon.

The earth was flat and stationary at the centre. It was surrounded by water on every hand. The unknown author of the twenty-fourth Psalm speaks of God as having "founded it" — the earth — "upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Some, at any rate, of the people at that time looked upon it as fixed in some mysterious way in the centre of all-surrounding seas.

Just a little way overhead, above the dome of blue, was heaven. This was where God held his celestial court, surrounded by his angels. From this point of vantage he overlooked the earth and controlled all its affairs.

Just beneath the surface of the earth was Sheol, or Hades, where awaited the spirits of the dead. All the spirits of all the men and women and children that had ever lived were here in this underworld, waiting for the resurrection. Nobody as yet, with the two exceptions of Enoch and Elijah, had ever gone to heaven, in the sense in which we are accustomed to use those words.

In the mid-air, between the earth and the heaven, there were innumerable spirits, many of them hostile to human souls. Satan had his kingdom here. He was the "Prince of the Powers of the Air." We are not to suppose that all the spirits that occupied this position were evil spirits. Some of them were good; and, in the minds of the people, these strove against each other, the good trying to help, and the evil trying to injure, human beings.

Such was the general intellectual conception or picture of the ancient universe. We are always to remember that we are not at all to think that it may have been derogatory to the intellectual or spiritual power of Jesus, or to the value of his teaching, that he shared the intellectual conceptions of his time.

Without a miracle, and that we are not to suppose, — at least there is no slightest hint or indication of it, — all the great men of every age have been the children of their people and their time. They have transcended it in some respects. They have been able to look up the ages and forecast certain great changes which were to come ; and in this ability to see farther than the people of their time lay one of the distinguishing marks of their greatness. It is nothing against Dante, it is nothing against Homer, it is nothing against Virgil, that they did not hold the ideas of modern astronomy. It does not take away from their greatness, their spiritual insight, or their power.

So we are not to think that it is criticising Jesus when we suppose that he must have shared the intellectual beliefs and theories of his people and his time.

The first great thing to note is that Jesus believed with his whole soul in a spiritual universe. At the present time there are two great contrasted theories. We need merely to suggest them.

There are certain men, especially among scientific students, who have come to hold

that life is in some mysterious and inexplicable way a product of what we call matter. As they look out over the vast spaces and see the wonderful worlds, these men think of them as without consciousness, without life. They are made up of what is sometimes spoken of as "dead matter."

Possibly on some other planet a similar thing may have occurred; but here, they suppose, in some mysterious fashion, consciousness has come into existence. Here are beings able to feel and think; but this consciousness, they tell us, is the production of molecular movements of the particles that constitute the brain. Thought is a product somehow of matter. Feeling, love, hope, fear,—all that make up what we refer to as spiritual facts and forces,—are results,—local results, temporary results; and when the brain, which is the organ not only, but the producer of thought, becomes disintegrated and decayed, then the thought, the life, the personality, are to cease.

And by and by, when the old earth becomes frozen like the moon, or when it tumbles into the sun, this marvellous drama that has been played here will be ended; and the world will swing voiceless and dead,

or cease to exist altogether, as though nothing of life had ever been. This is one theory of the universe.

Jesus held precisely the opposite. He believed that life was first, and that what we call the "material universe" was possibly local and temporary, but at any rate a product of spiritual life, spiritual forces. He believed that we were surrounded by a spiritual world, and that the power to create this visible universe, and which keeps it going, and which manifests itself in individuals, had its source and its home in this which has come to be referred to by scientists to-day as the metethereal world, — a world beyond even the ether, a world of ultimate reality, a world of spirit and power and life.

The poet Spenser says somewhere, —

"For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form, and doth the body make."

This is his way of giving utterance to this spiritual theory of the universe. Life was before what we call matter; or, if not before it, was the cause and not the effect. Life it is which is manifested in matter. Life it is which is manifested in each individual soul. This, though he might not have used our

scientific or philosophical language to express it, was the general theory of the universe which Jesus held.

In the next place, he believed that man was by nature an inhabitant of that spiritual universe; that the principal thing about him was not his physical being, not even his intellectual being, considered apart by itself; but he was above and beyond all things a soul, a spark of the infinite and eternal life of God.

I do not know whether he held that human souls in any case had pre-existed, whether in that sense they came from God; but in the deepest sense he believed that we all came from God, and that we were here, clothed for a time and for some specific purpose, with these physical bodies of ours, but that the great, the essential, the important thing about us was the fact that we were souls, not *had* souls.

I do not like to hear people talk about *having* a soul — as though it was a piece of property that they had somehow come into possession of and might lose. If there is any soul, if soul exists at all, it is the essential man. So man is a soul. At any rate, this is what Jesus believed and taught.

In the next place, he did not believe that this spiritual world was very far away. We unconsciously think in the terms of the intellectual theories in the midst of which we have been trained. Since the Ptolemaic theory passed away, and we are in the midst of this Copernican universe; since we know that this little earth of ours is only like a tiny grain of sand on the shores of an infinite ocean; since we know that our solar system is only a little group of little planets around one little sun; and since we know that we can find no limit and conceive no limit to the physical universe,—if we believe in heaven at all, or in a place where spirits live, we unconsciously put it very far away.

It is a little striking to notice an indication of that in one of our favorite hymns, "Nearer, my God, to thee,"—a hymn which has taken the world captive, a hymn written by a radical Unitarian; and yet so much was she the creature of her intellectual environment that she speaks, when rising into the spiritual world, of leaving sun, moon, and stars behind, as though that spiritual world were away off beyond the limits of the visible.



I remember a sermon some years ago — I think it was by Dr. Talmage — in which he imagined some central sun around which all the other suns with their systems revolved; and here he located the abode of the blessed.

I read a book only a little while ago, or glanced it over, contending that the sun was the seat of the Eternal and Blessed City; but, if we put it as far away as the sun, that is farther than Jesus thought of it as being. It takes light eight minutes and a half to reach us from the sun. How near was Jesus in his thought to the spiritual world? He was so near that a whisper could be straightway heard. He was so near that in his imagination there could be an immediate answer to his requests.

He is in trouble; and suddenly an angel is by his side to help, to comfort him. In other words, he believed that this world of ours was, so to speak, folded round as by an atmosphere by the spiritual world, and that those who were the inhabitants of that world were not away off in some distant place. They might be, for aught any one knew to the contrary, close by our sides, — our companions, though invisible, our companions,

though intangible, our companions, though inaudible.

This gives us, so far as it goes, a true conception of Jesus' thought of the nearness of the spiritual world.

There is another point that is of great importance in estimating his thought. Jesus gives us no hint that the door was closed between these two worlds, that it ever had been closed or was going to be closed.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps startled the world some years ago by publishing a book called "Gates Ajar." She taught that in the modern world somehow or other the door which apparently had been fast closed had got open, at least by a little crevice. When we note what has been the dominant teaching of the Church, we can understand how startling this doctrine was.

The Church has always believed that, from the beginning of the world until the time of Jesus, God at least occasionally visited it, angels now and then appeared for some special purpose, the spirits of those that we call the dead were sometimes visible,—sometimes came on some special errand to their former abode.

It also believed that during the life of

Jesus, so far as he and his disciples were concerned, at any rate, the doors were wide open. It believed that they stayed open during what has roughly, and in a somewhat undefined way, been called the Apostolic Age. Then the doors were hermetically sealed. They have never been open since.

This is the ordinary teaching of the Protestant Church. The Catholic Church has not so believed. It has been more consistent and more nearly true to the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus taught, then, that the doors were wide open; that angels could come on God's errands, and that they constantly did come; and that not only the spirits of men could come and did come, but that they knew what was going on, that they were interested in our human affairs, that they could take part, now and then, at any rate, in what was being done by their former friends and associates. This everywhere is implied in the teaching of Jesus concerning the other life.

There is another point; and this is that Jesus teaches that the universe is one house and one household. It is the many-mansioned

or many-roomed house of the Father; and men, being essentially souls, are just as much spirits now as they ever will be, and are just as much inhabitants of the spiritual world.

We are wont to speak of the spiritual as a future life. It is not future. There is only one life in the universe; and that is this instant's life. Yesterday is a name, to-morrow is a name; and angels, all souls, if they are alive at all, are alive this instant and this instant only; and they never will be alive at any other time. For, when the next instant comes, it will be this instant again. It is the only time when anybody is alive.

If, then, we are spirits at all, if we are souls, we are in the spirit world now, although being surrounded by what Shakespeare calls

“ This muddy vesture of decay ” —

though I would not use this in any opprobrious sense. (It only means that our senses are limited, so that we cannot perceive some of the grandest features of our environment.)

And the people occupying these different

abiding-places in God's universe are all his children. They make up his one great family; and they are engaged in natural occupations, — living, not suspended in some unimaginable ether, outside the range of any ordinary human interests.

When we can analyze a man, and find out what are his different faculties, tastes, desires, possibilities of activity, those things which are essential to him, then we may forecast something of what the nature of his activities will be when he gets rid of his body, and recognizes himself as what he essentially is. At any rate, this is Jesus' teaching: that there are many rooms in the Father's universe house, and that the people occupying these different rooms make up one family, and are touched by reasonable human interests.

There is another point hinted at in the teaching of Jesus. It leads us to emphasize what has been already suggested; that is, that the people who, as we say, have died, who have entered into that other stage or sphere or kind of existence, are real, natural, human people.

I do not quite know that anybody taught it to me; but, when I was a boy, I used to

imagine that the minute a person died he was either a perfect angel or a perfect devil, and that he had entered upon a condition of things which was to remain unchanged. He was unlike what he was before, in some unimaginable way had changed so that he had ceased to be human.

I have very rarely conversed with anybody whose mind was not touched — tainted, may I be permitted to say? — with what seem to me utterly irrational notions in this direction. They are astonished to think that people in the other world should be ignorant, should forget anything, should make mistakes, should be human, just as they were here week before last, before they passed into the other state. They are astonished and a little shocked and horrified at the suggestion that they may be interested in ordinary worldly affairs. It seems a little derogation of their dignity that they should not be somehow sublimated above everything that used to interest them or that once they cared for.

I am not assuming the truth of any theories in this direction. I am merely trying to state what I think Jesus teaches or suggests everywhere, — that the people in

the spiritual world are just as natural kind of folk as the people in this world, and that they do not consider it beneath their dignity to remember and love and care about the things which they used to think of, love, and care for here.

It seems to me also clearly to be inferred from the hints which we find in the words of Jesus that he believed that the inhabitants of this spiritual world were in some way embodied. You know that this is New Testament teaching. Paul does not teach the ordinary church doctrine of the resurrection of the bodies which we have worn here. He does teach a doctrine of resurrection, of coming up, entering into this higher life; but he says that which is raised is not the body that was buried. God gives each spirit a body as it hath pleased him. Such is his phrasing in regard to it.

What do we find in the words of Jesus which looks in this direction? Take the scene of the transfiguration. I am only giving this as a picture of the belief of the time. Here were two or three of the disciples, who accompanied Jesus on the mountain; and there appeared to them as they talked—who? Two of the old prophets, Moses and

Elijah. And the disciples could see them and recognize them. They were not so etherealized that they were not visible. There was something real about them, so that, for the time at any rate, the disciples had no doubt as to who they were. So, whenever you find in the Bible anywhere the coming of the spiritual world into contact with this, the inhabitants of that world are visible and sometimes represented as tangible.

Now we need to remember that this whole question of physical and tangible is only a matter of degree. There are in this universe wide, almost limitless, ranges of real life with which our present physical senses cannot bring us into conscious contact. There are wide ranges of real existence that we cannot see with our present eyes. We know that our senses are very limited, and that it is only a very small part of the real things of the universe that we can either touch or discern with our present senses.

That does not make them unreal, that does not make them unsubstantial: it only recognizes the limitations of our present faculties, — that is all.      -

Is the ether less real than a granite



boulder? It represents an unimaginable quantity of power, beyond anything that we can reasonably think of as connected with the boulder. The mightiest forces of the universe, of this physical, this material universe, — the mightiest forces are the invisible, the intangible forces.

We say that a thought has power, a thought can reach across a gulf of space that separates us from a friend, and come into communication with that friend, perhaps half-way around the world. Something in this direction has been demonstrated scientifically, — demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt. But does thought leap an absolutely empty space? When a Marconigraph is sent across the Atlantic, is there no material connection between this side and that, merely because we have learned to dispense with the visible material of the wire?

That which the message runs along as it flashes its ether pathway is just as material as the old posts and wires of the Western Union: only it is a finer kind of material, that is all. And what the degrees are, who shall tell? We certainly, with our blunted and clumsy senses, have no way of doing

more than make a guess as to what they are.

When we talk of spirits as unembodied, so far as any imaginable power of mind is concerned, we are talking of nothing at all. We cannot imagine an unembodied thought. We know that thought with us is connected with the body, as far as we have ever been able to trace it anywhere. It is connected with some body; and, for anything we can see to the contrary, there may be bodies ethereal just as there are bodies material, which shall be as much mightier, as much grander, as much swifter, as much more tireless than those with which we are acquainted, as electricity is more than muscle. This, at any rate, is suggested in the teaching of Jesus.

Such, roughly speaking, are a few of the points which Jesus has given us, some glimpses of the outlines of his thought of the spiritual world. He believed that we, embodied here, came from God, and that the true destiny of the soul was to be found in God as our end and home.

We are not to mean by this that he thought of us as being reabsorbed into the Infinite. That conception is entirely foreign to the

thought of Jesus and to Christian teaching as a whole. He taught that in some way this earth was connected with, linked with, the Beyond, that there was some natural, logical connection between the two. He taught that the people who inhabited that world and existed in God cared for the people who are here. They were ministering spirits. They knew something about what was going on, — not necessarily everything; but they could care, and now and then they could help.

If we are to accept the ideas of Jesus concerning the spiritual world, then two or three results follow, which it is worth while to outline if only very briefly.

Is it not right here that we are to find Jesus' apparent indifference to a good many of the things that are happening in this world? Jesus did not seem troubled because a good many people were poor, because a good many were ignorant, because people suffered, because of the existence of disease.

In other words, he seemed to feel that we were going through a process only here, which was to find its outcome, meaning, explanation, in the spiritual world; and so,

naturally, in his mind the present conditions were comparatively indifferent, comparatively unimportant, so that we were not to be overwhelmed by them.

The great thing, according to his teaching, is not that we shall get out of one condition into another, get out of one place into another, but that we shall live where we are as souls, as spiritual beings, looking towards something which is to come as justification for the process we are going through.

He thought — and this is a continuation of the same idea — that we ought always to keep this ultimate fact in mind; and, while we are in the midst of these present human experiences, estimate everything in the light of that, and live for that.

Just as, for example, a student in Harvard or Columbia may play football, may visit the city and enjoy the company of his friends, go to the theatre, the opera, may wear this kind of garment or that, may love literature, art, may live a life which is each day brimful of interest; and yet, if he is a wise man, be looking forward all the time to graduation day. Everything is subordinated to that. Nothing else is of any great importance but that. Whatever he loses, or whatever he

gains as he goes along through his four years' course, if he is only ready to graduate, then all is well.

So, when a man is on a journey, he may need to reach a certain city by a certain date. He can stop over, if he has time, on the way to study places, manners, languages, customs, to delight in architecture, literature, art, the companionship of friends ; but everything is subordinate to the one idea that he must reach that place and be ready for the engagement that waits him there on a certain definite day. If he does that, no matter much about the other things.

This, then, is the theory of the Christian life as taught by Jesus ; enjoy things as you go along, study, feel, care, aspire, hope, delight yourself with your friends, with society ; but live ever with this one thing in mind, — that you are a soul, and that the end and outcome of life is to be found there.

One other point now at the end. If this theory of Jesus in its main outlines is true, there is another practical result of the first importance. Suppose these souls which are in the invisible see us, suppose they know about us, suppose they can help us, comfort,

us, what a different meaning it puts into life !

That is a wonderful picture which Paul sketches, where he represents these lives of ours as a contest in the old Roman arena, the circus. Tier on tier around the amphitheatre rise the ranges of seats, crowded with the eager onlookers, interested to see who will win, crowded with the friends of this contestant or that, ready to lament if he gives out or falls, ready to shout and cheer if he succeeds.

Paul draws this picture, and then says, "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses," — those who have passed into the invisible to us, but to whom we are visible, — "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Let us be shamed, let us be incited, let us be comforted by the thought of these onlookers.

I remember how in some moods, in my study or my parlor or wherever I may be, I look at a portrait on the wall. It is a portrait of some one I loved ; and it comes over me, — I cannot do a thing or think a thing or feel a thing that is unworthy of that friend, even in the presence of the image of him painted by the artist.

How much more, if we can think that some friend is always near us, or at any rate may be, invisible to us, but seeing and knowing what we do! How it ought to shame us, if we think of doing any unworthy thing! How it ought to incite us, inspire us, challenge us to the highest and finest things of which we are capable! And how it ought to comfort us, when we know that they care and that they are watching over us, and that they may, in ways which we can only partly understand, give us real strength, accessions of courage and power!

Jesus, at any rate, believed that all the worlds were one; that they were united, mingled together; that that life and this interpenetrated; that from that life flowed in light and power and inspiration for us here; and that the end, meaning, outcome, of all this life was to find its natural culmination there.

Such was the teaching of Jesus; such in its main outlines, we will hope, is true.





## XI

# THE COMMON FAITH OF CHRISTENDOM



## XI

### THE COMMON FAITH

Is there a common faith in Christendom? When one studies the history of the last nineteen hundred years, or when one looks over the face of Christendom to-day, one is struck with such divergences of belief, with such differences of spirit and temper, with such jealousies, such rivalries, such antagonisms, as seem to deny the existence of any common faith.

When the great, seething, new life of the first two or three centuries had at last taken shape, there was an attempt to combine the whole great movement under one head; but, partly on account of differences of belief, — which to-day seem to us of very slight importance, — perhaps more largely on account of the jealousy of those who wished to rule, Christendom was split asunder, and from that day to this there has been the Greek Church and the Roman Church, the Church of the East and the Church of the West.

The Western Church maintained for centuries the appearance at least of unity. Those who look with a little care beneath the surface will see that there existed wide differences; but they were suppressed or controlled. This condition lasted until the sixteenth century. Then came the great Protestant Revolution, which split the Western Church into two great halves. Since that day the process of divergence and apparent disintegration has been going on.

The fundamental principle of Protestantism is the right of private judgment. This has naturally led to the existence of a good many apparently divergent, if not antagonistic, sects. So, the differences appear to be more prominent and more marked than any observable unity.

Many of the differences seem to be superficial, slight, such as perhaps ought not to exist; but there are some of these great antagonisms which represent questions of truth or error, right or wrong, and they will inevitably have to be fought out to some final issue until the truth makes itself apparent and the right comes uppermost.

Ordinarily, as we carry on our every-day

work, as we are doing what seems to us the best thing to be done from day to day and week to week, we are within the limits of our own little organization, we are apt to become self-centred, a bit provincial, possibly censorious, as we look over the rest of the world. It ought, then, to be instructive and profitable for us to note, for a little, the great unities of Christendom and to draw some lessons from their existence.

In the first place, all the different parties and sects of Christendom believe in revelation. We believe that God has spoken to the world. We believe, however we may interpret that faith, that he is still speaking. Here, then, is a most important starting-point for a consideration of the great unities that underlie the superficial divergences of Christendom.

We believe that God cares for his children, and that he speaks to them, telling them what is true, telling them what is right, giving them light enough, at any rate, so that they may take the next step onward and upward towards the fulfilment of some high, if not at present clearly seen, destiny.

Some parts of Christendom believe that this revelation is contained in a book, and

that that book is infallible; that in every part it is God's word; that it not only contains the truth, but contains nothing but the truth.

There are other sections of Christendom which teach that God speaks through an organization or through the individual soul. The Catholic Church, for example, holds that the Church itself is the medium through which God teaches and leads mankind.

The small body of Friends, or Quakers as they are popularly called, believes that God speaks to each individual by some inner monitory, guiding, lifting voice. But in some way we all believe that God speaks to his children; and that, after all, is — is it not? — the great, central, important thing.

Those of us who cannot accept the infallibility of the Bible still believe that divine truth is in the Bible. We believe also that divine truth may be found in other Bibles, may be found in other books than those that are called Bibles. We also agree with the Catholic that God frequently speaks through organizations. We believe with the Friends that God speaks in the silence of the listening individual soul.

But the great thing, more important than

any superficial distinctions or antagonisms, is the common faith of Christendom that God does care, that he does speak to men, that we may hear, and may find his word.

Again, we are coming, more and more — and this is true of the whole Church, as education and civilization advance — to hold to the idea that no word is infallible because it is found in a book or because it is uttered through an organization or because it comes to the reverent listening of a single soul. We are coming rather to the acceptance of the great, profound principle, — first put into words, so far as I know, by that noble woman, Lucretia Mott, — “Truth for authority, not authority for truth.”

The world, then, is coming more and more to recognize the fact that, wherever a truth is found, by whosoever lips uttered, in whatever land, under whatever sky, in the far-off times or to-day, — wherever a truth is found, there is found a fragment of divine revelation; and, just as fast and as far as truth is discovered just so fast and so far is the Bible of the ages being written. Here, then, is the first great unitary truth of Christendom.

In the next place, we all believe that the

word uttered in the olden time is true,—  
“The Lord our God is one.” In this sense, though not in the technical theological use of the term, all Christendom is Unitarian. We believe in the oneness of God, “one God, one law, one element,” one life, one force, one aim, one end. This we all believe.

It is true that the great majority of Christians still believe in the Trinity, still teach it, still hold to it; but, though to many of us it seems incomprehensible, though we cannot accept it as true, those who hold it will declare with the utmost earnestness and sincerity that by their doctrine they do not mean to impugn or deny the essential, eternal unity of God. They only mean by it that there is some mysterious way in which this unity combines a tri-personality or manifests itself in three different ways.

I suppose that, as the world goes on, as more and more these great problems are studied in their historic origin and significance, less and less emphasis is laid on any particular form or definition of the Trinity. There is one, and only one, historically orthodox definition; but I suppose that in my life I have asked hundreds of people to



give me their definition of the Trinity, and I have never found one yet who could give it accurately; so little have people thought in this direction with consistent clearness.

I remember a friend, a prominent Congregational clergyman in one of the great cities of the country, who told me one day that his Trinity was something like this: He said, "The first person of it is the Universal Spirit and life of the world. The second is Christ; and I regard Christ as the manifestation of the Divine within the sphere of humanity. The Father,—that does not mean anything to me." That was his definition of the Trinity, which, as you will see, is no Trinity at all.

My present purpose is not to discuss the problem of the Trinity, but to emphasize the fact, in justice to those who are Trinitarians, that they are as strenuous defenders of the doctrine of the unity of God as are we. So that, whether we may be able to reconcile the facts or not, Christendom is at one in regard to this great, central truth of the universe, of religion and of life.

Another unity is found in the doctrine of Jesus. It may seem strange to speak of the

matter in this way; but the fact of the oneness concerning the point I am about to mention is more important than any of the divergences of opinion which may be held in any quarter of the Christian Church.

We believe in the humanity, the manhood of Jesus. Every orthodox church believes in the utter, perfect humanity and manhood of Jesus. The difference is that they believe something else, which many of us cannot accept; but the great central, eternal truth of Christendom, the significant truth, that which has made it important and mighty among the religions of the world, has been, it seems to me, the doctrine of the clear, perfect humanity of Jesus.

The orthodox churches tell us that Jesus was not only perfect man, but that at the same time he was complete and perfect God, the two natures being somehow mysteriously united in him, so that he should have only one will. All this seems to us not only incomprehensible, but unnecessary. We think we can trace historically the growth of these ideas, and see how they sprang out of philosophic speculation rather than any clearly revealed word from above.

It seems to us that this doctrine is some-

thing which it is utterly impossible to establish intellectually as being true. I, for one, confess that I see no possible way by which it could be proved, even if it were true. Think for a moment. God puts into a man, let us say, all of divine that a man can possibly hold and remain a man. Suppose you put more in. He must inevitably cease to be man. Suppose he works miracles. But men have been reported as miracle workers in all ages. Suppose he utters astonishing truth. But men have been supposed to be inspired to utter God's truth in all ages and in many nations. By what mark, then, should we be able to know that a man was God, even if it were true?

People discuss to-day with a great deal of heat and earnestness the opinion of John, or Peter, or Thomas, or some one of the Fathers concerning Jesus. But suppose we had an undoubted and unquestioned affidavit from John, or Peter, or Paul, or any or all of the Fathers? Suppose they had written out, and we had the record still in their handwriting, certified before some proper official, what would it mean? Would it be anything more than the opinion of John, or Peter, or Paul? How could it be anything

more, or in what way could it be supposed to establish such an asserted fact?

This I speak of in this way to hint our attitude towards the subject; but the great, significant thing is that Jesus, regarded as divine in all ages, has been perfect man in the thought, in the faith, in the theologies, of every part of Christendom.

And here is the secret of the power and the hope. This means a likeness between God and man. It means what John Fiske has put into some of his scientific teachings, — the fact that the power manifested in the universe is a quasi-human power. It means what Browning sings in that marvellous poem, "Saul," — that, when we see the face of the Divine, it is a human face that we see.

The great, significant point in the whole teaching is that God and man are alike, and that God can be in a man, fill him full, and he be only a man, not transcend the limits of manhood, and that so we may believe that the mighty power at the heart of the infinite universe is like ourselves, and that he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that he can think and feel as we think and feel. And so we are not alone,

we are not orphans. It is our "Father," — our Father because Jesus was a man.

However the doctrine may have additions made to it, however it may be defined or perverted, this is the heart of it, this is the essential thing; and here all Christians are at one.

There is another point which illustrates our unity. We believe substantially the same thing in regard to the nature and condition of man. This may seem rather a strange, startling statement, when we remember the doctrines of the fall and of total depravity, and how men like Luther said that natural virtues, — virtues on the part of a man not yet converted — were only a sort of splendid vices, — it may seem strange to assert that Christendom is here substantially at one.

Where is the unity? All Christians believe that men are imperfect, that they are involved and enmeshed in evil, that they need to be delivered from this evil. There is the great central fact. They differ in their explanation as to how he got into this condition, they differ as to their methods of getting him out of it; but the fact that he is there, that he is ignorant, that he is evil,

that wrong exists, and sorrow exists as the result of this wrong, and that men need to be delivered from it, — there is the great central fact of the teaching of Christendom in regard to the nature and the condition of man.

We are aware, of course, that the world for centuries has believed in the story of Eden and the doctrine of the fall, and that this story tells us how evil came into the world. We are aware, of course, that there are certain sections of the Church who say that the one way for a man to be saved is for him to repent, and become specially converted as the result of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

There are other sections of the Church which say that, if you baptize an infant after a certain fashion, the child's nature is changed by the mercy of God through the means of that ritual, and that he becomes saved.

There are others who say that, if you partake of a certain sacrament, after a prescribed form, and become a member of a certain divine organization, you thus become partakers of God's life, and so are made over, — re-created into the divine likeness.

But these, after all, are comparatively superficial distinctions, not of so much importance as is the general recognition of the condition and that we are all trying to find a way out of it.

We note another thing which is growing, the complement of this great fact, which is increasing and being more and more generally accepted by Christendom year by year; and that is that the test of a man's salvation is coming to be recognized everywhere as residing in the fact of character. What is the man? not What has he done? Has he been converted, has the holy Spirit wrought a miraculous change in him? Then let him prove it. How? By the way he lives, by the spirit he manifests, by the service he renders.

This test is coming to be more and more applied in every department of the Christian Church. They are beginning to recognize the profound truth of the words of Jesus: "By their fruits ye shall know them." They are beginning to apply the test that was set down by one of the disciples and recorded in the New Testament hundreds of years ago, "If any man say, I love God, and loveth not his brother, he is a liar; for,

if a man loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

So there is no church in Christendom to-day which will tell you that a man is saved if he does not live like a saved man. If he is hard, if he is cruel, if he is sensual, if he is unjust, if he is a slanderer, if he is a defrauder, if he is an oppressor of the weak or the poor, no matter how many churches he belongs to, nobody really believes that he is saved in the sense in which a man needs to be saved to become what he ought to be as a child of God.

So here, again, in spite of the superficial divergences and distinctions, Christendom is coming to be more and more at one. A man is saved when he is a true man, when he loves, when he tries to find the truth, when he serves, when he is kindly and gentle and good, when he cultivates the divine qualities. And no matter how many sacraments he has partaken of, nor how many churches he has joined, few believe that he is what he ought to be unless he is what he ought to be, and illustrates it in his life.

There is one other great principle on which, in spite of appearances, Christendom



is really at one. We all believe in punishment for wrong. We may call it natural results, or we may call it whatever we will; but the fact remains, and the fact is the point to which we need to direct our attention. We all believe in retribution in this world; and, if we believe—as I certainly do—in another world, we believe in retribution there, too.

A few years ago, unless I misinterpret their attitude, there was a section of the Universalist Church which believed that in a miraculous way, as a result of the atonement, people were saved at the time of death, and all of them alike entered on a condition of felicity in the other life. There are no Universalists to-day who hold that opinion.

There are, of course, very different ways of expressing this belief. There are some who hold that the punishment for sin is to be endless in another world; but the number of people who are really civilized, who hold this idea, is becoming smaller and smaller every day.

I have never found anybody in my life, who believed that his own friends, his own immediate circle, were in danger of endless punishment. It is only somebody away off

somewhere, or some very bad person, who is to suffer in this way.

But the great thing that we need to fix our attention on is just this: we believe in the inevitable result of punishment and suffering, as following on the heels of wrong. We believe it in this world; we believe it in all worlds. Just so long as sin exists, just so long as wrong is committed, just so long as law is broken, consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, just so long suffering must exist.

Here, then, is the great, central, underlying unity in Christian belief. We believe in the existence of evil, and that men must be delivered from it in order that they may be delivered from sorrow. Heaven is the blossoming of goodness; and hell, as Omar Khayyám has expressed it, is nothing but

“The shadow of a soul on fire.”

And that shadow must inevitably follow the commission of evil in this world or in any other.

Here, then, we have noted some of the great essential unities underlying the superficial diversities of Christian belief. It seems to me that it is worth our while to

fix our attention now and then on these unities, in order that we may get the impression into our minds that the word "Christendom" covers some real, great, historic movement, that has homogeneity, that has conformity to some central idea, and that is moving to some grand end.

It is not these differences of opinion that in themselves are harmful. Nearly all the evil of the past as touching these differences has grown out of one fact: that this department of Christendom, that that department, that the other department, — that each one of them has assumed that it was right, that it had the infallible truth, and that everybody else was wrong. Out of this has sprung intolerance, spiritual pride, religious conceit, cruelty, persecution, hatred, alienations of every kind. All the blood that has been spilt in the contests between different departments of Christendom, all the pain, all the heart-ache, all the persecution, the inquisition, the rack, the thumb-screw, the alienation of friends, the hatreds, the wrongs, — all of them have come from the fact that each department of Christendom has claimed that it, and it alone, had God's truth; and it has generally assumed

that other people, not only ignorantly, but wickedly, denied it, — wickedly shut their eyes to the truth, because they did not desire it. And they have assumed that they had a right to act for God in the infliction of punishment upon people who were wilfully going astray.

One thing those of us who have suffered from this attitude of other religious bodies need to guard against, — growing bitter; and we need to guard against cultivating the same spirit ourselves. We think we are right. We think in the main we are, or we should not stand where we do; but let us not assume that we are infallible in the sense that we have a right to pronounce judgment on other people.

There is only one thing that we have a right to be intolerant towards; and that is what? It is intolerance. Do not tolerate intolerance, but tolerate anything else. "Tolerate," — I do not like the word. I sometimes use it; but I always feel like offering an apology when I do. I do not want to be merely tolerant. I do not thank anybody for tolerating me. I claim the right to hold whatever opinion commends itself to me as truth. There is

something of conceit, something of looking down upon others, something of offensive patronage, in the idea of tolerating another man.

I claim the right to my opinions ; and I as freely concede the right to other people to hold either my opinions or any others which they find they must. The right—let me guard that by one suggestion : I have a right to hold my opinion ; but that right is limited. No man has the right to coerce me in the matter, and I have no right to coerce any other. I have no right even to hate another ; and he has no right to hate me.

But we have no right to hold any opinions except true opinions. In other words, we are under the highest conceivable obligation to be ready always to test our beliefs and try and find out if they are true ; for no man has a right to believe anything except the truth. He must believe what seems to him the truth at the time ; but he should be always open-minded and ready to welcome new light from any quarter, if he will be true to himself and true to God.

Another point. As we look over the world, let us see how inevitable it is that there should be these differences of opinion.

Look at the different races. See how differently constituted they are, what differences of inheritance, what differences of opportunity, what differences of temperament, what differences of culture, and then see how inevitable it is that they must look at these great world problems from different points of view, must see partially, one a little fragment here, another a fragment there.

And so let us learn that there is one thing more important than the immediate fact of our being intellectually accurate in our opinion; and that is, our being spiritually sympathetic and helpful towards all men. The spirit, the temper of our lives, the attitude we maintain towards people, is more important than that we should be just accurate to-day in our belief concerning this matter or that.

Let us be sympathetic, broadly, tenderly, lovingly sympathetic towards people, and remember that, as in the case of the Sabbath, — "The Sabbath is for man, and not man for the Sabbath," — so beliefs are for men, and not men for beliefs. Let us not dare to sacrifice our love, our sympathy, our helpfulness, on the altar of any intellectual system. Let us know that the one great

thing is that we help people, — help them think, help them live.

Let us remember that Oriental apologue, so beautiful, so instructive; how Abraham in his bounteous hospitality waited at his tent door, ready to distribute alms or to welcome any one who needed; and an old man came, tottering and weary, and Abraham said, "Come into my tent, and break with me my bread, and partake of my salt." And, as they sat at table, Abraham uttered his blessing in the name of God, and he noted that the old man did not join with him, and he reproved him for it; and he said, "I am of the religion of the Parsees." Then Abraham arose in his wrath, in his religious zeal, and started to drive him from his door, when suddenly a white-robed angel appeared, and said: "Abraham, God has borne with this old man for eighty years. He has blessed him with sun and rain, with friends, with life, with hope. Cannot you put up with him for a single night?"

Let us try to be, then, as broad in our sympathies as God. If he puts up with people, he who is perfect, let not us, so imperfect, dare to be hard or bitter towards those who differ, however radically, from

our ideas; for at the end the one great point is here.

In the very last part of the Gospel according to John it is recorded that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, and what shall this man do?" And Jesus said: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." We are not responsible for other people: we are indeed responsible for loving them and tenderly doing all we can to teach them the truth, to lead them unto the right way as we understand it; but our responsibility ends there.

So we must not waste our time because this man does not walk in the way in which we think he ought. We must take heed to the one supreme matter, — as to whether we follow the truth, cultivate the tender, genuine spirit of the highest religious life. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."



## XII

# THE FUTURE OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS



## XII

### THE FUTURE: A FORECAST

WHAT is the use of our trying to forecast the religion of Jesus, to tell what shapes beliefs and customs are to assume in the future? The use of it is here: If the universe is against us, then there is no use in our making any effort; for that means that God's methods are not ours, and we cannot pit our puny strength against omnipotence. But if we can believe that the tendency of things is, on the whole, good, and if we can find out what that tendency is, then we can gain heart and encouragement from noting it; and we can co-operate with it and help it on.

So it is worth our while, if we can, to forecast a little what is to come in the next few generations in the way of the growth and development of the religion of Jesus.

How shall we undertake this task? Patrick Henry, in that famous speech of his, said that he knew of no way of fore-

telling the future but by the past. If we can see the way in which things have been going, the way in which they seem to be going now, then we can make a fair estimate as to what is likely to be their outcome next week or next year.

Some years ago, when General Greely was at the head of the Weather Bureau in Washington, I went with him to his office, and he talked to me in regard to the methods of predicting the weather. He told me — what I did not know at that time, and what it seems to me we ought to take account of when judging the wisdom of these predictions — that he was obliged by law to make a definite forecast, even when it was largely a matter of guess-work. He had to prophesy.

He took me to a map, and said: "Here, for example, is a storm, now in Texas. Its general course is northeast. We know now at what rate of speed it is travelling. Of course, it is very easy, supposing it to keep on just as it is going, to tell where it will be to-morrow. But nobody knows where it will be to-morrow with definiteness and certainty, because something may occur either to retard or accelerate its movement. Con-

ditions may be met which will deflect it north or south, so that the best we can do is to calculate the probabilities."

He also told me that it was not an uncommon thing for him to ask his first assistant to make a prophecy, and for him also to make one, and to find next day that both of them were wrong.

But it is only by noting how things have gone in the past and how they seem to be going to-day that we can forecast the probabilities of the future. You see a man pursuing a certain course of conduct. Enlightened by the history of human life in the past, you say, If he keeps on, such and such a thing will be likely to result. It may be a matter touching his health, or his character, or his methods of doing business. But it is in this way that we can reasonably prophesy. It is not necessary to follow the course of the Mississippi River from its source to the gulf, in order to tell which way it is going. If you note its trend at a certain point near its source, and then a hundred or two hundred miles below, in spite of its turnings and changings and eddyings, you may know with practical certainty where it will empty.

When we can study the history of a nation, the peculiarities of a people, the great principles which are working themselves out, we can tell what is likely to be the issue in a hundred years. In this way, and in this way only can we study the religion of Jesus, and see what it is likely to become in the future.

Religion has always existed in the world, and in the nature of things it always must exist. We have not time to go into this matter now, neither is it important; but it is very easy to show that religion, by its very nature, is something that must last as long as humanity lasts. Its essence resides in the eternal and universal relationship which exists between us and the infinite Power manifested in the universe.

All nations, all tribes, all peoples everywhere, have been engaged in the one same, universal, eternal, religious search. They have been trying to find God, trying to find out what he desired at their hands, trying to the best of their ability to obey him. This is what people always and everywhere have been endeavoring to do.

And it is perfectly natural — nay, it is inevitable — in the early ages of the world's history, when man was savage, weak, igno-

rant, crude, that the manifestations of his religious life should be savage, weak, ignorant, crude. Man cannot think better than he is able to think. He cannot do better than he is able to accomplish. So the early forms that the religious life of the world assumed were just what we ought to expect to find there.

President Schurman, of Cornell University, in a remarkable address which he gave some years ago in Boston, outlined three great stages in the advance of the religious life of the world. They will serve as a frame-work for some part of our thought.

He said that in the early ages the one important thing, as estimated by the opinion of the people at the time, was the cult, the ceremonial, the service. Very little stress was laid on morals, what we mean by conduct to-day. Very little attention was paid to the creed. The principal thing was the sacrifice offered to the gods. This sacrifice must be of a particular kind; it must be on such or such an altar; it must be accompanied by such and such ceremonies. The priest must be dressed in some specific fashion. He must face towards certain points of the compass. He must pronounce

certain formulas, and in definite tones of voice, and with particular inflections of those tones. All this external form, ceremony, ritual, was, as they supposed, insisted upon by the gods; and this was the one thing which was important.

It did not make much difference how you behaved, what you believed; but it made all the difference in the world as to whether you conformed to the prescribed ceremonial. This, President Schurman said, represents the first great stage in the religious history of the world.

The next one was that of creed. He did not mean by this that ceremonial ceased to exist, only it fell comparatively into the background. It was regarded as of less and less importance; and the one great thing was what men believed. This is a condition of things which existed in the early ages of Christianity, when the Athanasian Creed, for example, came into existence, and when it is solemnly declared at the end of it that such and such things men must believe or perish everlastingly. They continued their interest in the ceremonial; but the great thing was what they believed, accuracy of intellectual ideas.



President Schurman says that, though the ceremonial still persists and though there are those who lay a great deal of emphasis still on the creeds, relatively these are becoming of less and less importance, and that the great thing in the civilized world to-day is the spiritual attitude, — which way a man is looking, how he feels towards the great spiritual realities of the world.

If a man is reverent and tender and helpful in spirit, if he is trying to find the truth, to serve and help his fellow-men, then he may use whatever ritual he pleases, and he may be very free in regard to his intellectual ideas. These are of less and less importance; what your spiritual attitude is becomes the principal thing.

Undoubtedly, these great stages of advance do represent in some rough way the progress which the world has made up to the present time. But now we need to go back for a little and see how Jesus anticipated this tremendous advance of the world. Let us note for a little where Jesus stood nearly two thousand years ago. It seems to me that this is not sufficiently well appreciated; that we do not regard the wonder of it as we ought.

What did Jesus do? More significant yet, what did he not do? You are familiar with the fact that he organized no church, and said nothing about any one else's organizing one; he left that to take care of itself. He said nothing about any formal ritual; he established no ceremonies whatever; he left that again to take care of itself.

He did, though, one very significant thing in regard to these, or, rather, said one very significant thing. I think it is fair for us to interpret his attitude as something like this: He said in effect, The ritual is well; but he distinctly and definitely declared that something else was of unspeakably more importance.

He said, If you bring your gift to the altar—you see he did not object to their bringing it—but if, when you have brought it, you remember that your brother has aught against you, if you are out of right relation to your fellow-men, then leave your gift there, and go and be reconciled to your brother first. Then come, if you choose, and offer your gift.

But the essential thing, the preliminary, the one thing of supreme importance, in his estimate, was the relation in which we stand

to our fellow-men. This was the teaching of Jesus in regard to ritual.

Again, Jesus never wrote any creed, never directed anybody else to write any. He said nothing about any creeds being binding on men. He never made an intellectual belief the condition of entrance into the kingdom of God.

We see, then, that Jesus, nearly two thousand years ago, anticipated the position which President Schurman tells us we are only beginning to approach and realize in this twentieth century after his time.

But, as is perfectly natural, Jesus was away ahead of his age. The people were not ready to appreciate or understand these great spiritual teachings and principles which he enunciated. So for the first fifteen hundred years at least, after his crucifixion, the Church itself insisted upon those things which he had relegated to at least a secondary place.

The Church insisted upon organization, and made this organization a condition of future felicity. A man must become a member of this organization in order that he might be a partaker of the divine life, and so be delivered from the anger of God and admitted to the glory of his kingdom.

Then, again, the Church insisted upon the ritual. It reinstated it at the top after Jesus had subordinated it to something higher. It said that no man can be saved unless he becomes a partaker of the sacraments; and so thoroughly was this believed, so dominant was this idea during the Middle Ages, that the head of the Church, the one who held control of power that could bring all Europe to his feet, the pope, had simply to deny the sacrament to the people of any particular kingdom, and the king himself was uncrowned and his sceptre snatched from his hand by the fear of the people. He was obliged to conform, so that salvation once more might be conferred upon those who came by the only specified and acceptable way.

The Church again reinstated the creed after it had been put in a secondary position by the Master himself; and until very recent times intellectual beliefs have been made the condition of salvation. So the world took hundreds of years for progressing to the point which Jesus himself occupied nearly two thousand years ago; and only here and there have the most enlightened reached that position as yet.

We are ready now, from these cursory glimpses as to the trend and tendency of things in the past, to estimate a little which way they are moving to-day, and what are to be the important things in the religious life of to-morrow.

In the first place, is there to be any great church union? One thing that is very largely and prominently discussed at the present time is the union of all Christendom under some one great head. Every little while the Catholic Church issues an invitation to all the other branches of Christendom to come to her and recognize her as the leader. The Church of England has extended a similar invitation to all other Protestant bodies.

The idea seems to be that there ought to be a union of all the different forms of Christendom under some one great head. Is there any likelihood of this? If there is not, then we need not waste our strength in working for it. If it is not desirable, we should turn our enthusiasm into some other channel.

Here is one reason for us to try to estimate which way things are going and which way they ought to go; for from the beginning of the world there has been a waste of

energy, of money, of time, of thought, of effort, of enthusiasm, in endeavoring to accomplish impossible results, or results which we have found out after long experience ought not to be accomplished.

Ought we then to dream of, to believe in, to work towards the union of Christendom, as it is called? I believe that a negative answer must be given to this question. If we study the progress and growth of things in the universe, we shall find that they are in precisely an opposite direction. Evolution, which is only another name for growth, is, they tell us, always from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Let us note one or two illustrations.

Astronomers tell us that all the matter which composes this present solar system of ours used to be diffused as a fire-mist or a nebula through space. There was homogeneity, sameness, the union of likeness; but the progress of evolution meant the breaking up of this sameness, the destroying of this union, and in place of that we have sun and planet and moon and asteroid, an infinite variety, making up, however, one great, beautiful system, swayed by one law

and moving towards one end. The growth of things, then, is away from similarity, away from likeness, and towards multiplicity, variety.

There is a certain kind of union in an acorn, — sameness, homogeneity; but let it burst and grow, and what do you have? You have in time the century-old oak, with an infinite variety of unfolding and development. A unity? — yes, a unity, however, not of sameness, but of diversity.

What is the tendency in horticulture? Take as an illustration the development of the rose. I suppose, if we go back far enough, we shall find some one ancestor of all the roses that are now familiar to the lover of flowers. But what has been the tendency? Are men to-day trying to make all the roses grow alike? Are they selecting some one pattern and trying to conform the rest to that?

I remember some years ago in the West I visited the grounds of a man who prided himself on having twelve hundred different kinds of roses; and I presume that a very large number of new ones have been produced since then. It is not sameness that people are looking for here, it is variety;

and the man who makes himself famous is he who can develop something new, another kind of rose, another kind of fruit, another kind of shrub. So the method of nature is not towards sameness, homogeneity; it is towards infinite unfolding, expansion, and variety.

The adherents of the Catholic Church sometimes criticise the Protestant because it is broken up into so many different sects and factions. Let them criticise the factions as much as they please; but I see no reason why we should shrink from being criticised on account of the different sects. If there is jealousy, controversy, antagonism, these things are evil; but the variety of unfoldment is not an evil, nothing for which an apology is required. In this way, rather, does the infinite variety of human nature and human life come to its full and complete expression.

Let Christianity, then, assume as many forms as shall represent different expressions, and different types of real life; only let there be at last a great union of spirit, of love, of endeavor after truth, rivalry of service, consecration to the highest and best things. This, it seems to me, is what we are



to look for in the future; this is the only kind of unity which we are to desire.

One other great change has been going on and making very rapid strides in the last hundred or two years. Even when I was a boy, the one dominant idea of the only kind of Christianity with which I was acquainted was fixed on the effort to save your own soul. Expression of this may be found in a hymn which I used to hear sung, and with which I was very familiar:

“ ’T is a thing I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love the Lord or no,  
Am I saved or am I not? ”

Here was the one great anxiety of the Christian, — to be sure that his soul was saved. This was the one thing which was preached, the one thing which was pressed upon the attention of men. And I remember well the horror of this uncertainty, how I longed, and wept, and prayed in the endeavor to find out as to whether my soul was saved or not. In those sad days I never was able to satisfy that longing: I never could find anything that seemed to me definitely to determine the matter.

But in the progress of Christianity in the

last few years (a progress which we can see making way more and more, and which I believe is to be dominant in the religion of Jesus in the future) is the forgetting all about the salvation of the individual soul. Did not Jesus — indeed, I wonder how people so completely forget his teaching — say that “he that saveth his life shall lose it”? Did he not teach that the way for a man to become divine was to lose all consciousness of the endeavor to become divine on his own account, separated from his fellows.

And is it not perfectly clear that he uttered here an eternal and changeless principle? That which makes a soul divine, what is it? It is love, devotion, pity, sympathy, helpfulness; and these things mean the forgetting of self. So that the way to save your soul is to forget, in your absorption in your work for the world, as to whether you have any soul or not. Pay no attention to your own soul.

“Look out and not in;  
Look up and not down;  
Look forward and not back;  
And lend a hand,”

as Edward Everett Hale has taught us to say.

This is the way to save your own soul. You cannot possibly save your soul by devoting yourself to it. You cannot help saving your soul if you devote yourself to the work of the world.

So the Church in the future is to change its emphasis completely. The old revivals are things of the past. I do not believe that the world in the coming years is going to get excited over the question of the deliverance of the soul from the wrath of God or from punishment in another life. No man is going to be worried in the future over problems like that.

The great thing in the coming time — and this is our next step — is going to be service. This, again, Jesus taught nearly two thousand years ago: "If any man will be great in the kingdom of heaven, he must serve." Jesus "went about doing good." "He made himself of no reputation." He consecrated himself to the service of others. And this (we are beginning to see it now as a self-evident truth) is the one great thing in the religious life. We are to care for humanity; we are to give ourselves to the service of the world.

Churches are to exist? Yes, I believe

churches will exist, grander and nobler in the coming time than they have ever been yet in the history of the world; but they will not be organizations to which the people will come for the sake of saving their own souls. They will be organizations for the purpose of increasing the power of the individual, so that more can be accomplished for the world.

The principle of organization in the Church will be precisely the same as it is in commerce, in industry, in any other department of human life. It will be a device for the increase of power, for the accomplishment of larger and more widespread results.

Ritual will remain? Yes, because there are some people who love ritual, because there are many natures which find in it the natural expression of their emotions, their feelings, their aspirations. On the other hand, there are those who dislike it as completely as others are devoted to it. So this will be a matter left free for everybody.

Have all the ritual you will, if only it is the natural expression of your religious life; but it is not in future to be regarded any more as a condition of life. We are not

to believe that children are saved from the wrath of God by having a little water sprinkled on their foreheads. We are not to believe that a reprobate old man is to be suddenly transformed into a saint and made capable of entering into eternal felicity by having the ceremony of extreme unction performed over him in the hour of death.

We are not to devote ourselves to these external forms, as having in them the secrets of life. They are well in their place and as the expression of life; and that is all.

Again, the creeds are to remain, or, at any rate, creeds will continually come into existence in the future. Any man who thinks, and if he is at least half-intelligent, must have a creed. That which he believes, whether he writes it down or not, whether he promises to abide by it or not, is his creed. So creeds will remain; but they will not be regarded in the future as conditions of salvation. They will be only the expressions of the ever-advancing and widening thought and theory of man.

These things, all of them, will remain, but they will take the secondary place that belongs to them; and the great work of the Church in the coming time will be to serve

humanity. In what particular way? In every way. The Church is broadening all the time in her practical charities, serving the needs and alleviating the sufferings of human bodies; but these are only the alphabet. Here is only the beginning of her ministry; and these things are relatively of the least importance among all those which she ought to aim to accomplish.

The Church serves man better when it helps him in his industrial life; better if it enlightens his intellectual life. The Church of the future is to be a leader of thought, a teacher of men, teaching especially those things which touch the practical worth and conduct of human life.

And then the Church is to serve men by holding up ever before them the supreme objects of love, of admiration, and of worship. The Church, in other words, is to serve the heart and the inner life of man; and then, beyond all, it is to cultivate the soul. More and more, as it seems to me, in the coming time it is to be recognized that the one great thing to be done in the world is to develop the human soul, — not in any selfish way, but in unselfish ways; to have this as the high, leading, luring

ideal of life. "The development of a soul; little else is worth study."

That seems to me to be the keynote of the future, — the development of the soul. This is the thing that the Church is to devote herself to in the ages that are to come.

Carrying this point one step further, the Church is to recognize and teach what is coming more and more to be seen as the great central truth of human life. It was said of Jesus that he came "bringing life and immortality to light." This, I believe, is true. He came bringing life and immortality to light. The one great thing which he gave to the world was life, — "I come that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly;" more life, fuller life, deeper life, wider life, — life! This is the thing to cure the world of its weariness and its weakness, and to make us feel immortal.

The Church is to teach, as its great ideal, that every man is naturally deathless; that he is a spirit now; living in a spiritual world now. This world is no less spiritual because we are clothed with bodies which we call material; because we are in the midst of all this brave and wonderful show of things. We are essentially spirits; and the

recognition of this fact is to be the capital one, in my judgment, in the teaching and the work of the religion of Jesus in the coming years.

Men are to learn more and more that they are souls, that they are children of God, and that they are living here in this world as a part of the education, the training, the development of themselves as children of God ; they are to learn that everything else is secondary, subordinate ; they are to learn that the body is important for the development of the soul ; they are to learn that joy is important, that sorrow is important ; that gaining things may be important, that losing things may be important ; that all the incidents of our career are subsidiary to this, — that everything is intended to minister to this.

Here is the secret of life. Here is the central, essential meaning of existence. This is what we are here for ; and when we have learned this, all the difficulties, all the troubles, all the burdens, all the cares, all the incidents and experiences of life, will take their places as experiences by the way ; and the principal thing will be the way and the end towards which it leads.



## APPENDIX

### I

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS



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### I

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RECENTLY I came again upon some words of James Russell Lowell, which merit ever fresh attention :

“It seems to me that the bane of our country is a profession of faith, with no basis of real belief, or with no proper examination of the grounds on which the creed is supposed to rest.”

And in another place : “If men have not enough of spirituality to find an inward beauty in religion, they will begin to bedizen her exterior.”

If I do not misread the signs of the time, it is a characteristic of our age which these sentences of Lowell set forth. We are not apt to think, or to care overmuch about thinking, in religious matters. People say, Play upon my susceptibilities to beauty, appeal to my emotions, but do not ask me

to think. And yet thought, and a little careful thought, is the only pathway to the real presence of truth, which is the presence of God.

It is incumbent on us, then, to do a little careful thinking concerning a matter which is fundamental to our religious faith, which is of the utmost theoretical importance not only, but of practical importance as well. And if any of you are not inclined to think, or do not at first find yourselves in sympathy with the line of thought which I ask you to follow, I ask you one other thing, — not to judge me or the theme until I am through, until I come to the practical outcome of it all.

How did Jesus come into the world? We shall see, when I am through, that this is more than a matter of speculation. It touches our conception of God and of the order of his world, of the nature of man and of human destiny, — touches them all fundamentally, so that we really live in one kind of universe or another according as we think one way or another concerning this one problem.

I will ask you to note, however, that this is not a question of belief in or love for God.

It is not a question of belief in or rejection of the Bible. It is not a question of love for Jesus or accepting him as our religious leader. It is not a question of practical piety,—except as it is certain that the truth leads to the deepest and highest practical piety.

Again, this matter as to how Jesus was born is not a question of “faith,” and cannot rightly be. It is purely and simply a question of historic fact. It is to be treated in the light of the evidence, so far as we can discover it. We have no right to decide questions of fact by our feelings or by any emotion misnamed faith.

I shall ask you to note what the New Testament has to say on the subject, and then the testimony, in some brief and general way, of the Church Fathers for the first three centuries; and then I shall try to set forth, as earnestly as I can, what seem to me the practical religious implications of the belief. And this last is what I shall have in mind all the way through.

Let us look, then, at the New Testament, and see what it has to say about the birth of Jesus. One of the most illuminating things you could possibly do would be to

read the New Testament books in the order in which they were written. The order in which they stand to-day, in the published volume, is a wide departure from the chronological order. The first books of the New Testament which were written were the letters of Paul. Paul was beheaded during the persecution under Nero at Rome, about the year 66. Note that date, please.

As Jesus was born four years before the beginning of our present reckoning, he died about the year 30. Paul, then, died about thirty-six years after the death of his Master. Did you ever note that Paul has never heard any story of the virgin birth? There is nowhere the slightest reference to it in any writing which he has left — no indication that he knows anything about it; and this, of course, would be entirely impossible, provided the story had been current during these thirty-six years between the time of the crucifixion and the death of Paul.

The first one of the Gospels to come into its present shape was Mark; this appeared about the year 70. Did you ever notice that Mark has nothing to say about the virgin birth? He evidently had not heard of it. It is very striking also to note, in passing,

that the Gospel according to John does not refer to it; and yet this Gospel is the one that is popularly supposed to teach the most exalted ideas as to the nature and office of Jesus. The Gospel of John was written by nobody knows whom, somewhere near the middle of the second century; and the writer either had not heard the story of the virgin birth in the country where he lived or he did not consider it of sufficient importance to take any account of it. Consider this most remarkable fact!

Now we come to the two Gospels which do mention it,—Matthew and Luke. When were they written? Not far from the end of the first century. But did you ever notice—for people read so carelessly when they read at all—that the stories of Matthew and Luke are utterly, hopelessly irreconcilable? Let me give them to you in simple outline:—

According to Matthew the home of Joseph and Mary was Bethlehem. Then there comes the story of the wise men from the East following the guidance of the star until it stood over the place where the babe was born. Can any sane man to-day believe that a star travels about the sky after this

fashion? Where was the babe born, according to Matthew? In Joseph and Mary's own home. He says nothing whatever about any stables or manger. Then Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled by the report of this birth; and we have the story of the flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents.

Now Herod died the very year that Jesus was born; and the tradition of the murder of so many helpless babes is absolutely without any foundation. Herod was bad enough; but there is no reason why we should blast his memory with so gigantic a crime as this.

Then Joseph and Mary with the babe, after Herod's death, returned from Egypt; and, being afraid to go back to Bethlehem, it is said that they went north, and thereafter made their home in Nazareth. That is the story of Matthew.

Now let us see what Luke tells us. Joseph's home, according to Luke, — his original home, — was in Nazareth, not Bethlehem as Matthew says. Then the emperor issued an edict that a census should be taken of all the people in the empire; and this, according to the story, required that people



should go back to the places where they were born, there to be counted.

But there is no historic ground whatever for this story. There was no necessity, according to the laws of the Roman Empire, for doing anything of the kind; and think what it would have meant that all the people, all over Palestine, should leave the places where they were living, and go somewhere else, if they happened to be born somewhere else, while the census was being taken!

Then Mary, just before the birth of the babe, makes a difficult journey over hill and through valley, on the back of a mule, eighty miles to Bethlehem. When they reach there, there is no room in the caravansary for them; and the babe is born in the manger. We find here the story of the angels and the shepherds. Then the babe is taken to Jerusalem, and presented in the Temple. There is no story of Herod's slaughter of the innocents. There is no indication that anybody was afraid of Herod. After the birth in Bethlehem they go back home to Nazareth; and that is their home.

Such are the stories that we have in Matthew and in Luke. That you may not think

I am a lonely holder of these opinions, let me call your attention to the fact that within the last month or two the Rev. Dr. Fremantle, a high official of and one of the finest scholars in the Church of England, at a meeting of the Church Congress, startled the people by making the declaration that apart from the opening words of Matthew and Luke there was no reason whatever for believing these statements, and that the story was not a New Testament doctrine.

Passing from this, let me call your attention to the genealogical tables. Did you ever notice them in Matthew and Luke? Read them over with care, and note that it is the genealogy of Joseph that is traced in both instances. It is not the genealogy of Mary at all; and, unless Joseph was the father of Jesus, these genealogical tables have no more to do with Jesus than they have to do with John the Baptist or with Peter or with me. These tables evidently were compiled while the people still believed that Joseph was the father of Jesus; and they took their places in the Gospels, having become traditionally so sacred, probably, that the writer did not feel at liberty to leave them out; or, possibly, he did not note the discrepancy.

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I could run over the Gospels, and find little unconscious testimonies, which are stronger just because they are unconscious. Let me note one or two.

In the early part of the Gospel according to John, Philip and Nathanael are talking about Jesus. Philip says to Nathanael, We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets have written; that is, we have found the Messiah. Nathanael says, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" How does Philip answer? If Philip had known that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it would have been the most natural thing to say that "He did not come out of Nazareth, he came out of Bethlehem;" but his answer simply is, "Come and see."

For another unconscious bit of testimony, we find it recorded that the brethren of Jesus did not believe on him. Does it seem possible to you that they could have grown up with Jesus in that home in Nazareth for thirty years, and never have heard anything about the wonderful fact that Jesus was God in disguise, if Mary and Joseph had known it and believed it?

As to how the testimony of the New Testament is brushed one side for doctrinal

reasons, let me call your attention to what you are perfectly familiar with, that the Church, in its main teaching for hundreds and hundreds of years, denied that Jesus had any brothers, although the New Testament speaks of them over and over again. This, of course, in the interest of the dogma of Mary's virginity.

Let me call your attention to another little indication in this direction. In Luke there are two places where every scholar knows that the original Greek text has been changed for an express doctrinal purpose. The original writing refers to the parents of Jesus, to the father and mother of Jesus. These are changed, and made to read "Joseph and his mother," or something of that kind.

One other hint: In the story in Luke, Jesus visits the Temple. On the way home, he is lost in the crowd; and his mother is wild with excitement. Think of it! If she knew that he was God, could she be afraid that he would get lost on the way from Jerusalem home to Nazareth?

I call your attention to these unconscious testimonies. Then take the explicit words of Paul: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the *man* Christ

Jesus." This is the teaching of the entire New Testament.

If you do not wish to take my word for it, let me call your attention to what is said by the most famous of all the Church historians, Neander, the learned German, traditionally orthodox. He says: "This doctrine of the trinity does not belong to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, as is sufficiently evident from the fact that it is expressly held forth in no one particular passage of the New Testament."

Now I wish to trouble you with the names of a few of the Church Fathers, — Clement, Polycarp, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius. These men who lived during the first three centuries, every one of them, has made it perfectly plain that the doctrine of the deity of Jesus was not a doctrine which was generally held during those three centuries by the leaders or the body of the early Church.

Note another little fact. The old first church in Jerusalem, whose leader — bishop — was James the brother of Jesus, remained, until the Jewish nation was blotted out of existence, firm in its adhesion to the original faith in the unity of God, and that Jesus

was the son of God only as we may be,—a divine messenger, sent to carry out the Father's will. Justin Martyr expressly says, "There is a Lord of the Lord Jesus, being his Father and God, and the cause of his existence." This in the second century. And Augustine, who died as late as the fifth century, has confessed that he "was in the dark until he found the true doctrine concerning the divine word in a Latin translation of some *Platonic* writings."

Gradually, Pagan ideas and Platonic philosophy crept into the Christian Church during the first three centuries. Gregory Nazianzen tells us that when Athanasius first started to defend what became orthodoxy in the later centuries, he "stood alone, or with a very few." And we know from history that the Arians were driven by force out of the churches, and that an *ex parte* council was called by a Roman emperor for the express purpose of establishing that which came to be the belief of the later centuries.

There is, then, no good reason in the New Testament or in the early church history for the belief that Jesus was God. I believe, and I assure you that all the best,

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the unbiassed scholarship of the world is back of this statement, that Jesus was born in Nazareth, about the year 4 B.C., that his father was Joseph and his mother Mary. The month, the day of the month, nobody knows.

There is no time now for me to explain how it happened that the 25th of December was decided upon; but remember this,—it was after much controversy, and was not generally accepted throughout the Church until some time in the fourth century. You need to remember also that this apotheosis of Jesus took place at a period in the world's history when such things were common. It was one of the most superstitious times the world has known. The Roman emperors were made into gods as fast as they died. The shrines of Augustus were worshipped all over the empire. It was only natural, then, that such an age should take away from us the real Jesus and give us an imaginary figure in his place.

I believe, then, that Jesus was man. I believe in the divinity of man. I believe in the humanity of God. I do not believe that there is any gulf of separation between the divine nature and ours that needs to be

bridged by any unnatural and stupendous miracle.

Let us now come to a consideration of the practical side of our theme. I call to your attention what you know, — if you will stop and think of it, — that the doctrine of the deity of Jesus is part of a scheme the characteristics of which are pessimism, disaster, despair. It is part of a scheme of theology, of a theory of the universe and of human history that begins with the fall of man, with the curse of God, and that ends in the eternal loss and woe of the immense majority of the race. It is the central dogma in a plan the purpose of which was to deliver a certain part of humanity from the results of the fall.

Where are we now? Why should we go back and burden ourselves with the discredited horrors of the ages of the world's ignorance and barbarism? We know now, — it is no question of dogmatic statement, — we know that there has never been any fall of man, and that there is no need in the nature of things for the coming of God into the world by unnatural methods to deliver man from a condition which does not exist.

We do not believe now in the eternal loss



of any human soul. And note one thing: the priests, the ecclesiastics, the churches of any name, who still hold to these dogmatic ideas, — the great majority of them, — do not themselves any longer believe in either the fall of man or everlasting punishment; and yet they keep up the form of maintaining a theory which is hopelessly discredited in the light of modern knowledge.

Another thing: I may trouble some of you by what I am now going to say. I say it, however, out of my profoundest conviction; and I appeal to you to give it the most careful thought. This dogma of the virgin birth is a slur on womanhood; it is a slur on fatherhood; it is a slur on our conception of the Divine. The fact of sex is the deepest, most central, most universal fact of the universe. So far as we know, it reaches to the depths and to the heights of being. It must express something which is real and eternal in the being of God himself, else it could not be imprinted upon everything that bears the mark of his thought and his hand.

This doctrine that there is something essentially and necessarily impure in sex, in the relations of men and women, was spawned

in the filth of Oriental imaginations, prurient and false, — originated among men who did not keep either their minds or their bodies clean. It is an Oriental stigma on human nature and on God. Why should it oversweep and defile the West? We healthy-minded, vigorous men and women, who believe that God knew what he was doing when he created the present order of affairs, — can we believe that God has made humanity rotten at the very core?

Are not babies born of father-love and mother-love sweet and pure? Must a child come into the world without a father to escape this stigma? That is the implication out of which the dogma has come.

I believe there is nothing sweeter, nobler, purer on earth than the yearning love of a mother as she clasps to her bosom for the first time the babe that has just been given her fresh from the hand of God. Think for a moment! She has gone down to the very border of the shadow, and taken out of the hand of Death himself the tiny torch of life, that she may pass it on to the generation which shall follow.

There are millions of fathers and mothers who know that this love between them and

the love they share for the child is clean and pure and true. I ask no nuns or monks, brooding in their darkness, to teach me and teach God as to what is sweet and clean. We do not need an unnatural birth in order that God may get into his own world. He was in the world already; and has been all the time.

Did you ever think, in passing, that, even if we could prove that Jesus was born without a human father, we should not have taken a single step towards proving that he was God? We should simply be proving that a marvel had happened, — that is all.

One other thought let me suggest here: If God desires to put into a human being as much of himself as he can, how much can he? Can he, in the nature of things, do any more than make a perfect man? If he transcend those limits, then this creature, this being, ceases to be a man. God can put into a stone only so much of himself as to make a perfect and finished stone; else it would not be a stone. God cannot put into a flower any more of himself than is consistent with the perfection of the flower, or it ceases to be a flower. God could not put into a man anything more than is con-

sistent with the perfection of the man, or he would be a man no longer.

One other suggestion : This doctrine not only besmirches the white purity of human love, but it degrades our whole conception of human nature. Must we believe that, when some supreme man appears, he is not man at all ? If so, why ? Merely because we have been taught for hundreds and hundreds of years that humanity is not capable of anything high and fine. In other words, we have been taught a degraded conception of human nature.

I believe that Jesus was man ; and, believing that, my whole conception of humanity is lifted, clarified, ennobled, and I bow in reverence in the presence of this wonderful being. If you think for a moment where man started, — weak, ignorant, the conditions of his life away down there on the edge of the jungle, — and then if you think what he has accomplished, and what he has become in the process of that accomplishment, then you can understand a little of the magnificent possibilities of this being that is sometimes derogatorily spoken of as “mere man.”

Mere man, — capable of all the thought, all the inspiration, all the genius, all the dis-

covery, all the invention, all the wonder-working that has transformed the earth, and made the heavens familiar places! Man is the son of God. Remember those New Testament words: the writer says, "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be," — for this marvellous race is climbing up and going on; and Jesus is the first fruit. Jesus proclaims to us what is possible in human nature, what we may become; and we call him our leader, and love and reverence him as our teacher, because he gives us faith in ourselves and makes it possible for us to follow him.

For, once more, stop and think, and see that, if Jesus is God, and if by that term we mean something unlike man, then he can be no example for us. What is it to me that you tell me that God could go through the form of being tempted without falling?

By the way, let me interject right in here what I wonder if you ever noticed. The New Testament tells us that Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are." It says explicitly in another passage, "God cannot be tempted." But Jesus was tempted; and what does temptation mean?

If Jesus was God, then it is mere mockery

to talk of his being tempted. It is no temptation to a man when you ask him to do something which he does not wish to do, that he is not inclined towards. There must be something in me that longs for that which is forbidden before I can be tempted.

And I question whether you can call me perfect so long as there is anything in me to which evil can appeal; but it must appeal if I am to be tempted.

What is it to me that God could face a mob in angry opposition and not quail? How childish the very idea! What is it to me that God could come into this world in a human body and be crucified? That whole scene outside the walls of Jerusalem is theatrical, meaningless, if Jesus was God! Think of God trembling in the garden of Gethsemane, think of God crying out and shrinking from the cross, when he knew that fact was just what he came for, and when he knew that a moment only lay between him and the throne of the universe,—nay, that he had never left the throne of the universe! Can we conceive the universe as without a ruler? Did he leave his throne even temporarily?

What is it to me that God could do all these

things? Of course he could; I knew that before. What I wish to know—if it is to help, thrill, inspire, lift, and mould my life—is that a man can be tempted and be a man; that a man can face an angry mob in opposition and still be true to his truth; that a man can be crowned with thorns, buffeted and spit upon, and yet not quail; that a man can carry his own cross until he faints by the way outside the walls of the city; that a man can be hung between earth and heaven and still be true; that a man can temporarily wonder even as to whether God has left him, and still not falter; that a man can faint and languish through death into immortal victory.

Let me know that, and a great courage comes into my soul. He is my leader, he is my inspiration, he is my comfort, he is my guide.

And so, never in all my life did I so love, so reverence this Jesus of Nazareth as I do to-day. Never was he so much in the way of fellowship, of comfort, of inspiration. I will loyally and gladly bow in his presence for the divinity that was in him, for the fact that he shows me the Father and leads me the way to peace.

The light of the world, of all its scholarship, of all its finest thinking, points this way. It is only the ignorance, the prejudice, the groundless traditions of the past, insulting to God and dishonorable to man, that support the old out-grown ideas.

Let us fearlessly, then, front the light and follow the guidance of the Master as he leads us into the presence of his Father and our Father, his God and our God.



## II

### THE HUMAN JESUS



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### THE HUMAN JESUS.

ABOUT nineteen hundred and four years ago, during what time of the year nobody knows, a Jewish babe was born in Palestine. They named him Jesus. He lived until he was thirty, then began a public career, proclaiming the kingdom of God, going about doing good. After a year or two, he had made himself so obnoxious to the constituted authorities that they put him to death. His enemies supposed that the matter would end there; but there were a few faithful souls who had been touched, enthralled, inspired, by his words and his life. They organized themselves into a little community, and waited for some divine manifestation of the kingdom of God. That which they looked for did not come; but this community grew until by and by it became mightier than Rome, and conquered Rome.

Since that day, though the man was little noted at the time, — so far as we know, not

being referred to by any contemporary writer outside of the New Testament,—he has stood the central, supreme figure of the civilized world. In his name more kindnesses have been done, more cruelties have been committed, than in the name of any other who has ever lived. He preached peace, but his name has been made the signal for bloodshed and war,—not through his fault, for ever his spirit has won its way more and more in the hearts of men; and it never was so dominant as it is to-day.

Who was he, what was he besides being a Jew? Many tell us that he was God, that he is God, who lived for a little time a human life, and disappeared again into the heavens. Others tell us that he was man. In which theory shall we find the most of inspiration and of help? For there are these two theories that I wish briefly and in broad lines to set before you, so that you may see that for you individually it is one or the other; for these two are mutually exclusive.

According to one theory the universe was created a few thousand years ago; man made perfect. He fell; and the world lay helpless under the wrath of God. Then there

came to be here and there foregleams and prophecies of a salvation that was to be offered to the race; and by and by, miraculously, without any human father, Jesus appeared in the little town of Bethlehem, really God, clothed in a human body. He grew up in the home of his father and mother, like any child. Then, when he was thirty, he manifested himself to the people, called the disciples around him, taught, suffered, was crucified, descended into the underworld, came up again on the third day, and resumed the body which he had worn with his disciples, and then at the end of forty days disappeared into the sky and entered the heavens, clothed still with his human body, where he sits at the right hand of God, administering the new kingdom which was organized for the salvation of men.

Only a few have heard of it, only a few believe it; and there are but a few comparatively who are to be saved. The rest, by this same Jesus, are to be sent away at the last day into chains and darkness and torment forever and ever. This is one theory.

The other tells us that the world has been in process of creation for millions of years;

that that process is still going on to-day; that some three or four or five hundred thousand years ago the life which had been divine all the way through and up climbed from the ooze of ocean's shores until at last man appeared, standing upon his feet and facing the heavens. Man appeared, ignorant, barbaric, childish, weak. From that day to this he has been evolving, ever into something finer and better, until at last, in what, counted by geologic time is only yesterday, he blossomed out into Jesus, — Jesus in the human line of inheritance, born as any other man is born, with a father and a mother both human. He lived a human life; he sympathized with human cares and sorrows; he carried human burdens; he taught by precept not only, but by example; he shared the common life of common men. But so grand, so true, so noble was he that he out-towered the ordinary levels of life as a mountain out-towers his fellows and the plain, — not because the mountain is different in structure, in material, from the rocks and the sands that make up the plains and the lower hilltops, but only because it is lifted by the divine power into this higher position.

So Jesus, according to this theory, is man, but a supreme man,—man summing up the best that the race is capable of, man the first-fruits of the kind of race that is to be, man the promise, the prophecy, of what is to come. He manifested the divine life on this theory as truly as he did on the other, only in a natural way, and sharing it with all his fellows. And, if this theory be true, we look for no last day when he, who is the loving son of man, Jesus our brother, is to sit on a throne, transformed into a judge, as one who condemns and casts out his brethren. We expect him to be our brother, our loving fellow-servant, helper, teacher, master to the end. And we believe that there is to be no outer darkness and groaning forever, but that the race is to progressively incarnate the divine life, and enter upon its divine inheritance.

Here are two theories. If one of them be true, the other cannot be; and yet one of them, that which I have just roughly outlined, is that which the careful study of science, of history, of church tradition, of the origin and growth of religions, of this Bible and all the Bibles, leads us naturally and almost inevitably to accept. Those

who do study with free and open mind are coming more and more to feel that there is no other conclusion at which they can rationally arrive. One is demonstrated truth : the other is tradition, with no foundation in reality.

But there are a great many tender hearts and loving souls face to face with what to them is a sad dilemma. Their brains may persuade them to go in one path. Their hearts, their sentiments, their sympathies, their spiritual hopes and aspirations, they think, plead with them to take the other. There are many people at the present time who would unhesitatingly accept this latter theory, only they have come to feel that it involves somehow a loss to the spiritual life. Their religious feelings, their religious aspirations, they think, must be put under foot and dominated by the intellect if they are to follow the teaching of science and history and criticism.

But now let us look a moment, and see if this be true. It is to answer this question that I have chosen thus to treat this theme. I think, if you look back over the past history of Christianity, of the power and influence of Jesus over the hearts and lives



of men, you will be compelled to feel — if you look at it carefully, dispassionately — that it is the human side of Jesus that has wrought the wondrous, the beautiful results. It is not Jesus as God, it is the human which touches our hearts, which comes close to us, which appeals to us, which dominates us, which thrills us, which enthralls us, which inspires, which comforts, which cheers.

In those countries where they have made Jesus, so to speak, too exclusively divine, they have had to invent Mary, — some one who could come in close touch with human wants and human sorrows, human feelings, human temptations, human fears. They go to the Madonna, and plead with her, and say: Mother Mary, thou canst understand, thou art human, thou wast tempted, thou didst suffer, thou canst feel for us. Plead thou with thy son, the second person of the Trinity, that he, too, may pity and may understand. This is the action, the instinctive action, of the human heart.

It is really, then, the Jesus who was tempted, the Jesus who suffered, the Jesus who mingled with the common people, and partook of all their wants and cares and

understood the kind of life they lived, who has been the inspiration of the Christian life for all these nineteen hundred years. This is the Jesus who is pictured in art. This is the Jesus who appears in the lives of the mystics and the saints.

Now let us ask a question as to what it is that we need in order that we may have the kind of help which shall enable us to lead the religious, the spiritual life. We need, in the first place, a standard, — something by which we may judge ourselves, by which we may measure our attainment, see how far we fall short and what we need to do in order to attain.

Now a standard of action, a standard of living, a standard in literature, in art, anywhere, need not be perfect. Indeed, I am inclined to think that it is more helpful if it be not quite perfect.

To illustrate what I mean, let us look at the figure of George Washington. He was made so faultless to my young imagination as a boy that I never thought of its being possible for anybody to copy him. He had been idealized until he was out of the human range. That is a process which is continually going on in regard to the world's

heroes. We tend always to idealize them until we lift them above the level of what ordinary people can be expected to become; and then we are apt to excuse ourselves, and say that was easy for him, but we are not up to his level. I remember what a relief it was to me when I gave a little more careful study to Washington, and found that he was human enough so that he could get terribly angry on a battlefield, and even use words which are not considered polite in a drawing-room. This does not mean that I was glad to find a flaw in Washington. I was glad to find that he was human, that he was within my reach, that he belonged to that range of humanity to which I belonged,—that was all.

So you place before a painter a picture that is faultlessly, absolutely perfect, a picture painted by a god, if you please, and he cannot expect to copy that,—that is beyond the reach of his powers; but let him stand in the presence of a Raphael, or an Angelo, or a Titian, and though supreme and superb, they are men still, and can become standards by which he can judge himself, and in the presence of which he may aspire. He may say, I may not be able ever in this life quite

to reach that, but a man did it; and I am a man, and so I can try, — I can come somewhere within reach of it, at any rate.

But, if a standard is beyond our reach, it ceases to serve for us as a standard. We want a standard, then, such as we can find in the life of the Nazarene, the human Jesus. We are constantly finding similar standards all about us in the great and good of every race and every name. We regard one man as admirable in this direction, another as admirable in that; but, when we turn to Jesus, we feel that he was admirable in all the things that make up the sweet and gentle and true and holy life, and so he can become our standard of judgment.

Now, when we have got a standard, what next? We want to turn this into an example; we want an example that comes within reach of us, — an example that we can reasonably copy. Now let us test Jesus in two or three directions in the light of this fact.

Jesus, they tell us, was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet nobody found any flaw in him. He was tempted. If he was not tempted, if he did not feel as we feel, if he did not engage in the moral battle that confronts us, then he can be no example for

us ; and the Bible itself says, " God cannot be tempted of evil." Of course not. God, who sees right through the evil, who knows at a glance that it is evil, and that no good, no ultimate joy, can ever come out of evil, — he who sees and knows that, because of his divine insight and omniscience, cannot be tempted. If Jesus was God, it is absurd to say that he was tempted in all points like as we are.

I am perfectly well aware that they make a distinction for the purpose of argument. He is two or one, as the case may require. He is tempted as a man, but not as a God ; and yet it is a heresy — a heresy condemned by all the theological councils of the world — to say that Jesus possessed two wills, the will of a man and the will of a God. He had one will, though they gave him two natures ; and he could not be tempted unless that will was inclined to the thing that tempted him. If he did not want to do wrong, why, then it was no temptation. If there was nothing in him that temptation could appeal to ; if he possessed no fleshly desires that longed for indulgence ; if there was nothing in him that pride could touch ; if there was nothing in him that could be

roused to anger ; if there was nothing in him like these human frailties of ours ; then it is only words, words, words, and meaningless words at that, to talk of his being tempted as we are.

But, if he was a man, and was tempted, felt all the impulses that we feel, felt surging beneath the deeps of his upper calm all that chaos of evil and wrong desire that has so many times broken forth and threatened to submerge the world, — if he felt all these, and yet was master, then he can help us. We can say: Yes, here is an example for us. When we are tempted, he knew what it meant ; and still he conquered. He did it. I can do it. He was a man ; and I am a man. He was a child of God ; I am a child of God. It is not something beyond my reach ; it is something that appeals to me, and rouses in me all that is high and fine and noble, to combat and put down all that is mean and selfish and vain. So he becomes, as man, a helper in the religious and spiritual life, as he could not possibly be if we put him out of the human range.

And, then, take him in his relations with the rich and the poor, for example, — the two great classes that men are insisting shall

exist in the modern world. Did he cringe in the presence of the rich? Was he patronizing when he associated with the poor? What was his attitude? A man, if he is to be a man, must hold himself superior to either riches or poverty; he must know that "a man's a man for a' that." A man is neither more nor less than a man because he is rich. A man is neither more nor less than a man because he is poor. A man is neither more nor less than a man because he has had opportunities for education or has not had them, because he is born in Europe or in America, because he is born a Christian or a Mohammedan or an Indian or a Jew. A man's a man.

A man who will lead a manly life must make wealth serve his manhood, must make poverty serve his manhood, must make lack of opportunity, joy, sorrow, serve his manhood, must keep his manhood at the top all the time. Did Jesus do that? Jesus walked in the midst of the rich and the poor in such a way as to leave no pride in the heart of the rich and no bitterness in the heart of the poor. His attitude towards them both was such that, when he had left their presence, if they understood the mean-

ing of his life and his words, they would be lifted and thrilled and inspired by them. So we can take him for an example.

But, if he was God, then what? How can God be an example to us in his attitude towards the rich and the poor, when the universe is his, and there is no possibility of his passing through an experience of poverty, when the universe is his, and there is no possibility of wealth's meaning anything to him? But, if a man can lead the life that Jesus did in the midst of the poor and the rich, the high and the low, then he becomes an example and an inspiration to us to keep our manhood erect, to respect ourselves, to be too nobly proud to cringe to wealth, to be too nobly proud to scorn the poor, to remember that these are conditions created by forces over which he has no control, and that it is his business not only to lead a man's life in the midst of them all, but to help others to do the same. So here, it seems to me, the example, the life, the teaching, of Jesus help us, because he was a man, because he was human, because he could be touched and moved by all these conditions and motives that touch and influence us.

There is another phase of life through



which we must pass, through which Jesus passed also. We lose friends. We lose them in two ways; and I think that way which is not through the gateway of death is the sadder of the two. Jesus lost friends because he asked of them too much. He asked some high and noble thing of them; and they were not ready for it. He uttered some saying, and they shook their heads and said, "That is too hard for us," and they went their way, and walked no more with him. They misunderstood him. They were not willing to share his method of life. They were not willing to go among the poor, and devote themselves to the service of their kind; and so they left him, alienated from him because of misunderstanding; because they were not yet tall enough in soul to measure the height of his sublime and noble nature.

And then he lost friends by death, and wept with heartbreak over the loss. Was he God? Then there is no such thing as his losing the friendship of people; those not yet able to appreciate and understand must be treated from the divine point of view, as little, undeveloped children,—no anger, no threats, no punishment, simply

wait for them to grow. And death can mean nothing to the eternal life of God, — death, which is simply passing through a phase of experience of life. Why should God shed tears over the death of any one of his children when he has ordained death as the experience of them all?

But the man Christ Jesus, the Nazarene, the human friend, who in spite of his consciousness of God, in spite of his sympathy with God, had his hours, if the record be true, of doubt and gloom and loneliness and question, — if he was brave and noble in the midst of these experiences, then we can be. When his friends turned from him, he did not let it make him bitter. Too many times, if somebody does not understand us, we find it very hard to keep on being friendly with them. We become alienated, we become soured, we become embittered, we no longer feel tender and loving and kindly towards them. Jesus never allowed it to make him bitter. He simply said, They do not understand: Father, forgive them. And then, when he wept over the loss of friends by death, though he may have believed ever so strongly in the immortal life, he longed as we long for the present, the continued, the tender

companionship of those who are dear to us ; and perhaps he had his hours of wonder as to what sphere they would occupy in another life, as to whether or not they would outgrow their fellows, as to whether or not we might not have to wait ages before we caught up with their spiritual development. If Jesus could be true, patient, tender, loving, helpful, in the midst of these experiences and if he was a man, then we may take him for a model and inspiration.

Turn to another point. One of the grandest things, we say, in the life of Jesus is that he was faithful to his conviction, faithful to the truth, no matter what attitude men might maintain toward it or him on account of that faithfulness. He never deserted the standard of right. Persecution might blanch his cheek, but it could not turn aside his forward-leading footsteps. Misunderstanding, mistrust, the embittered feeling of those he loved, the attitude of father, mother, brothers,— for it is said his brothers did not believe in him, and taunted him,— none of these moved him. He was true to his conviction,— true clear to the end, and, when death itself threatened, unswerved.

And to carry the matter a little further

still, and complete it, when the final hour of trial came and he could no longer postpone putting the bitter cup to his lips, then he did not falter ; he did blanch, he did turn pale, he did shrink from it. Could a God blanch, turn pale, shrink ? He said, " Father, if it be possible, let the cup pass from me ; but, if it is thy will, I will drink it." This was his attitude.

And then that Friday afternoon, on the little hill outside the walls of the city, when he hung on the cross, — I think that is one of the most thrillingly magnificent scenes in the history of the world, or one of the most theatrically unreal, according as to whether we consider that Jesus was man or was not. If the words mean anything, he had an hour when he thought that even God might possibly have forgotten him. He said, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " There was that hour of gloom, when the face of the Father was eclipsed, when he distrusted God and distrusted his own mission, distrusted his own triumph ; and yet he did not falter. He clung to his conviction of the truth, to his faithfulness as a man, to his crown as a supreme martyr, — clung to it, and swooned

through death into life, the life immortal, on the other side and here equally.

This, if he were a man. If he were God, the suffering could not have been real. He knew that it was simply passing through the pre-ordained gateway, leaving aside his body, for the throne of the universe. Does God shrink, cry, grow pale, turn back from his own eternally ordained path? Could there be, if he were God, any model, any example, for us as we stand faithful to our convictions, as we meet contumely and persecution at the hands of our enemies, as we stand face to face with the last dread figure, the shadowy figure of death?

But if he were a man, and if he believed in God, in spite of passing clouds that obscured his face for a little, and if he believed that his truth was God's word, transmitted to him to deliver and stand by till the end, then for him to say concerning the hooting mob around his feet, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" to hang there between earth and heaven hour after hour, in agony, faint in weakness, needing to be revived by his enemies that he might bear a little more pain; to wait patiently, then, in spite of the last cry of despair, still to

cling to his faith, still to cling to his God, still to cling to his message, still to be faithful to his truth,—then it is sublime, it is magnificent beyond the power of any words to express.

And here is an example and an inspiration for us. If he, a man, our brother, the child of our common Father, the sharer with us of weaknesses and infirmities and temptations and sorrows and darknesses and trials,—if he could do all this, and if he says, standing there, Come, follow me, it is not so hard as it appears,—then cannot we also be true, cannot we also be faithful, cannot we also look in the face of death, and believe that beyond the shadow there is light?

It seems to me, as we turn now—not for the sake of leaving the truth, but for the sake of emphasizing it in another direction—from the figure of the Nazarene to our own common daily experiences, we find this truth confirmed. I have, hanging where I can see it, a picture, a photograph of one brother, of another brother, who died many years ago; and these are constantly to me models, examples, inspiration. I think of them, how true, how brave, how sweet they

were, how noble they were in their lives, how human, how tender, how brotherly; and I am ashamed of a thought or a word or an action that they would be ashamed to see in me or hear on my lips. Just because they are my brothers, my friends, like me, of my flesh, my blood, my spirit, my brain, they become models and inspirations and helps to me day by day.

So you on your part: it is a brother, it is a father, it is a mother, it is a friend; it is some one who in the midst of poverty has lived sweetly and bravely, who in the midst of the loss of property has been cheery and strong, who in sickness has been courageous, who in watching over the sick-bed of another has been patient and sweet and tender, who in all these various relations of life has been noble. And they are to you inspirations every day, and you feel that you cannot sink below the level of what they have a right to expect of you. You feel as Paul did when he pictured that great cloud of witnesses rising tier on tier around the invisible arena where we fight our life battle, and think that they are looking down and expecting good things of us. And by as much as they were

noble men and true, and are waiting for you over yonder, you wish to go so that you can look them in the face, and meet the clear challenge of their eyes and not be ashamed.

If you will pardon the personality of it, I have one vision that I ever carry with me, in the presence of which I grow heart-broken and at the same time stronger. My boy, now four years ago, met death in the bravest way in which I ever saw it met by any one in all the world. He had made no professions of faith in another life. He died as suddenly as though he had been shot on a battlefield, with everything inviting, life all open, sweet, luring before him, but not a whimper, not a word of complaint, not a selfish word uttered. He looked up in my face, and said, "Well, papa, I suppose this is dying." But not a bitter word. And as I stand now, or lie or sit, and dream and think of the hours by that cot-side in that hospital, I should be ashamed to face death less bravely than he did. If I were carried off to a hospital to die alone, he would be there; and I should want to go through it so that I could clasp his hand by and by and have him proud of his



father. If it were a God who did it, it would be no help to me. It is because it was a human boy who did it that he becomes to me a standard, an example, an inspiration forever.



### III

## THE EMPTY TOMB



### III

## THE EMPTY TOMB

EASTER is not to be monopolized by any one church or by all the churches taken together. It is a human festival, older than Christianity, older than Moses. As we look away down and off towards the morning and see the first lines of the advancing column of humanity emerging from the mist of the twilight, we know that they brought with them in their hearts the Easter hope, and celebrated the Easter festival.

Christianity adopted, then, a day which is as old, so far as we know, as human hope. It consecrated it to some new and higher thoughts, and, in the minds of a great many, has made it thus exclusively its own. But, let us remember that it belongs to humanity.

But something specific happened near that tomb of Joseph outside the walls of Jerusalem on that Sunday morning. Something happened which has changed the face

of the world. Can we find out to-day precisely what it was?

I shall ask you to go over with me for a few moments the various forms of the story as it has come down to us in the New Testament records,—not in any spirit of scepticism, but for the sake, as you will see before I am through, of leading on to a deeper and higher faith. I ask you to note the variety, the inconsistencies, the apparent contradictions, of these different tales.

The earliest one who tells us anything about it is the unknown author of Mark. This record came into its present shape somewhere about forty years after the crucifixion. What is Mark's story?

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome come to the tomb with spices, very early in the morning, about sunrise. To their surprise they find the stone rolled away from the tomb. Entering into the sepulchre, they find out what has happened. They see a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment. They were afraid. He said to them: "Be not afraid. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen, he is not here. Tell his

disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him."

They came out trembling and amazed, and said nothing about it to anybody. That is Mark's story. There is no account, as you see, of any ascension.

What does Matthew tell us? At the end of the Sabbath, the dawn of the first day, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the sepulchre. There had been a great earthquake. The angel of the Lord had descended and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. The keepers of the tomb were very much afraid, and became as dead men. The angel said to the women: "Fear not. Ye seek Jesus. He is not here, he is risen. Come and see the place where he lay, and go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and that he goes before them into Galilee."

They departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. As they go, Jesus meets them, and says, "All hail! Be not afraid, but tell my brethren to go into Galilee. There shall they see me."

Then follows the story that the soldiers had been bribed to say that the disciples had stolen away the body. Then the disciples go away into Galilee, where they saw Jesus; and, when they saw him, some of them doubted. He gives them his command to go and teach all nations, and promises to be with them to the end of the world.

Matthew does not say anything about any ascension. What is Luke's story? The first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women — he does not say who they were — came to the sepulchre, bringing spices to embalm the body. They find the stone rolled away. They enter in. The body is not there; but, while they are looking about, perplexed, two men stand by them in shining garments, who say "He is not here, he is risen. Remember what he spake to you while he was yet with you."

They return from the sepulchre, and tell these things to the eleven. It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and other women who were with them, who told these things to the apostles. The apostles regarded them as idle tales, and believed them not; but Peter and John had curiosity enough to run to the



sepulchre. They arrived there, and stooped down and looked in, but at first did not enter.

Then the disciples were on their way to Emmaus,—two of them. They talked about what had happened as they walked together. As they reasoned, Jesus drew nigh and went with them; but they did not recognize him. He argued with them concerning what had happened and told them it was what they ought to have expected. They also told him that certain women who had been to the sepulchre had told the story about his having risen from the dead.

Then, upon being pressed to do so, he goes in with these two disciples to take supper with them. While he is breaking bread and blessing it, they recognize him; and suddenly he vanishes out of their sight.

They arose and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together. They reported how Jesus had appeared to them; and, as they talked the matter over, suddenly Jesus was again in the midst of them. They were terrified, taking him for a spirit. He said to them: "Handle me, and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Then he asked for something to eat; and they gave him broiled

fish and honeycomb, which he ate before them. Then, after talking with them, he led them out to Bethany, lifted his hands and blessed them, and was carried up into heaven.

There is nothing said in Luke about the disciples meeting him in Galilee.

John's story: Mary alone goes to the sepulchre on Sunday morning. All the others say it was sunrise, — early in the morning or sunrise. John says it was still dark. Mary sees the stone removed. She runs and comes to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loves, and tells them they have taken away the Lord; and she does not know where they have laid him. John went to the sepulchre. He saw the linen clothes, but did not go in. Then Peter comes and goes into the sepulchre; then the other disciple also enters after Peter. As yet, it says, they did not know the Scriptures, that Jesus was to rise from the dead.

The disciples went away to their homes. Mary remained weeping. Stooping down, she saw two angels, one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body had lain. She tells them she is weeping because they have taken away the body of the Lord.

Then she turns and sees Jesus, but does not recognize him. She supposed him to be the gardener, and asked him what had been done with the body. Then Jesus speaks to her ; and she knows him.

That same evening, when the disciples were in a room with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews, suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of them. He shows them his hands and his side. Thomas would not believe it was really Jesus until he had made a personal examination.

After eight days the disciples are again gathered together, and the doors are shut ; and suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of them. Afterwards he is seen by the disciples by the sea of Tiberias. He stands on the shore while the disciples are fishing in the lake. Then they come ashore, and cook some of the fish ; and all of them dine together. Then follows the conversation about when the beloved disciple should die. There is no story in John about any ascension.

There is another account in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. You need to remember that the tradition is that the author of Luke is also the author of the

Acts, so you may expect to find similarities in the story. Jesus, according to this report, shows himself alive to many persons. He was with them in and out, going and coming, for forty days. He tells them to stay in Jerusalem until the gift of the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

Then, one day, he is taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. While they stand looking after him, two men in white apparel come and say to them, "Ye shall see him come as ye have seen him go." This occurred on Mount Olivet.

Here is nothing said about going to Galilee. Indeed the disciples are ordered not to leave Jerusalem.

In the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul reports that Jesus was buried and rose again the third day. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then after that by about five hundred brethren at once, and then of James; and, "last of all," Paul says, "he was seen of me also."

This last saying refers to the vision which Paul had on the way to Damascus. You will note another thing — that Paul makes no distinction whatever between the way in

which he saw Jesus and the way in which the other disciples are said to have seen him; and Paul says nothing about any story of the ascension.

It is not specially important, but interesting, to note that had not Luke's narrative come down to us, we should have had no record of any ascension at all.

I ask you to look these records over, and compare them quietly by yourselves, see how natural, how perfectly human they are, but how utterly inconsistent they are with any theory of infallibility. They are just such reports as you would expect coming from earnest, interested, devoted, but fallible men.

Now can we find out to-day just what it was that took place? If you notice the narratives with a great deal of care, you will see that there is no first-hand evidence whatever as touching the resurrection at all. We have no testimony of anybody who claimed in the ordinary way to have seen Jesus after the crucifixion. We have simply the story that somebody saw him, or that somebody says that somebody saw him. They are reports, however, that are not in the nature of what to-day we should call reliable evidence. We have no first-hand witness.

Can we believe, — perhaps I might say on any kind of testimony, — that a human body, after it has been dead and laid in the tomb, has come back again to its ordinary earthly life? There are large numbers of stories like this which have been told in different parts of the world; and yet it is perfectly safe for me to say that nobody ever thinks of believing such a story as that except as it is a part of his religious faith. Any ordinary, human record we put one side, and say that there must have been some mistake.

Can we believe that a body of flesh and blood and bones ever ascended into heaven? We must note here what a profound change has passed over the intellectual life of the world. To the ancient Jews heaven was only, so to speak, an upper story of the universe. It was a little distance away, and for aught they knew the atmosphere which we breathe was the atmosphere of heaven.

It was easy enough, given the adequate power, to lift a human body up through the intervening space and have it disappear out of sight in a cloud and pass on into the visible presence of the angels. No change was necessary. There were no standards of

probability to be considered. There were no intellectual difficulties of the modern kind in the way.

But we are in another universe ; and we know that no ordinary human body could live a moment after it had passed a certain distance above the surface of the earth.

These stories, as they have come down to us, as they are embalmed in church tradition, as they are consecrated in the memories of our childhood, are to-day to any educated man, to any competent thinker, simply unbelievable. If a man says he believes them, it means that there exists in his mind entirely another kind of world, in some department in the universe where anything can happen ; where the standards of evidence, the canons of probability, do not exist.

There have been men, famous men, who have frankly admitted this, and have yet said they believed. Faraday, for example, one of the greatest men of the modern world, one of the most distinguished scientists, frankly admits this distinction. He says, "When I go unto my closet, I shut the door of my laboratory ; and, when I go into my laboratory, I shut the door of my closet."

Here are two worlds to Faraday, one of them a religious world in which anything might happen, and the other a scientific world, where he demanded the utmost carefulness in the application of the rules of evidence.

But I am not saying these things for the sake of starting doubts in your mind. There are no doubts in my mind, but a greater belief than that which has come down to us by tradition from the ancient world.

I believe that Jesus was seen by his disciples, the real, living, thinking, loving Jesus, the Jesus who walked with them by the common roads in Galilee, who sat with them on the edge of the lake, who taught them from the side of the mountain. I believe that they saw him and talked with him, and heard him speak to them.

I do not believe, however, that the body which he wore before the crucifixion ever came to life again. I believe that they saw him in the spiritual body, with which all those who have passed through the change which we call death naturally are clothed upon. They saw him as he is now, and as all those we love are, and as they might, were the conditions right, still be seen.



Whether you agree with me in regard to this or not, one thing at least is certain. The disciples had a tremendous revolution wrought in their minds and their lives. They were cast down, they were disappointed, they were discouraged. They became enthused with a great hope, they became fired with a master conviction; and this great conviction transformed the world.

Think of the attitude of Paul, for example, towards death. He says frankly to his friends, To die and be with Christ is a good deal better than it is to stay here. He looked forward to it with joy. In another place he says, "To die is gain." In still another place he cries out, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

In some way, then, there came to Paul not only, but to the great mass of the disciples, what they took to be a great, new knowledge. It was no mere faith, no mere hope, no mere trust. They *knew*—they would have called it knowledge—that Jesus was alive; and, knowing that, they doubted not that they also should live beyond that change which is called death.

Now what did this new knowledge do for

them? It made the slaves of the Roman empire men; it abolished all earthly distinctions; it humbled the great; it lifted up the low; it cleansed the lives of the vicious; it made the worldly spiritual; it made the timid brave, and the weak strong.

Gentle, delicate women went without tremor into the arena, and faced the tigers and the lions with a smile, and with songs upon their lips. Death had no terrors. The common disciples became so enthused with the idea of this great life that awaited those who were faithful that they even sought after martyrdom as a crown to be worn with gladness, as a method of sealing the reality of their devotion.

In other words, this great knowledge that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was empty, — this great knowledge gave them power of conquest over themselves first. They were no longer animal men. They climbed up, under the inspiration of this knowledge, out of the animal into heart and brain and soul.

And when they had conquered themselves, and when death had utterly lost its terror, do you not see how of necessity they become invincible? There was no might on earth that could stand before them; and

during the first two or three centuries, they conquered and held in their hands the mightiest empire which up to that time the world had ever seen. They mastered Rome. And it was the knowledge that that tomb was empty which gave them this power and won for them this marvellous conquest.

I believe the tomb was empty. I believe more than that, — for I am coming now for a little while to this modern world of ours, — I believe that every tomb on the face of the whole round earth is empty. It is only our foolish fancy, our fond imaginings, which bury our dead. I believe that what the modern world needs more than all things else put together is the great practical, working, overmastering conviction that all tombs are empty.

I cannot now go into this matter at length; but if I might I could show you how this belief, a real belief, coupled with our knowledge of the universal and eternal law of cause and effect, might cleanse, purify, lift up, and redeem the world. Think for a minute. If everybody not merely dreamily hoped or believed, but felt that he *knew* that tombs were empty, and that no tomb was to hold him, but that he was to go on through the

incident we call death alive, and more than alive, as he has been here, — if he believed that, if he *knew* it, do you not see how everything else would be of slight moment? — how all the troubles that perplex the world would in the light of such a conviction practically fade away and be dissolved?

It is worth while to note a few things that this great conviction can do for us. I will say that this great conviction has largely done it already for me. It will take away the fear of dying. This has been the one great fear that has brooded over and darkened the world. It has been a skeleton at every feast.

And then that fear of something after death, — that which is involved in dying. It has been the one great terror that has faced humanity, that has taken the sweetness and meaning and beauty out of life. If we have this great conviction in our hearts and then look reasonably at the matter, dying will cease to be anything more to us than a journey.

I have suffered a hundred times more, perhaps a thousand times more, than I ever expect to suffer dying. That never gives me a moment's pause. I have no fear of it

whatever. I do not expect to know when I die any more than I know just the precise moment last night when I went to sleep.

We suffer pains and sickness and sorrows as we pass through life ; but in most cases the mere physical act of dying is painless, something of which we are entirely unconscious. But no matter what it be, if we know that it is not the end, then the fear of it has vanished forever.

I was talking with a gentleman the other night, and he said : " Oh, I hope for a future life. I really expect to live ; but, if I only *knew*, why, then, it would be nothing to me, any more than taking a journey into another country. And since, as I am getting older, and so many of my loved ones have already gone, I should feel that the majority pull was on that side, and perhaps, on the whole, be rather glad of the summons."

Another fear it will take away. This fear I believe to be very widely prevalent, and yet utterly irrational. How many people are there who have suffered all their lives long over the thought of the grave, of being buried ! But you will not have to be buried. I do not expect to be buried. I have no more

fear or care about that than I have as to what shall be done with an old and outworn suit of clothes. What difference does it make to me whether it is hung in a closet or put in a box or what disposition is made of it after I am done with it?

Socrates was wiser than most moderns; for, when some of his disciples asked him how he wished to be buried, what disposition he wished to have made of him after death, he said, "Why, you can bury me any way you please — if you can find me." He did not expect to be there or to have anything to do with the matter of burying.

So this story of the empty tomb should take away from us all fear of the grave. I believe we ought to detach, so far as possible, our imaginations from the grave.

One thing, let me say, in passing, seems to me lamentable, seems to me — may I venture to say it? — wrong. There are persons who spend thousands of dollars in cemeteries, in monuments over graves that are empty. A lovely, brave woman was talking with me during the last two or three days; and she said: "When I die, I do not want you to spend money even for one flower. If you have any money to spend,

spend it for somebody who is suffering, and do it in my name, so that I may feel I am healing and helping instead of wasting the world's hardly accumulated wealth."

If the millions of dollars which are in the cemeteries of this country could be spent to help the broken-hearted, the poor, the struggling, the suffering, the needy, how much more human, how much more civilized, it would be! Let us get away, then, from these empty graves. My friends are not on the hill-top by the river, down in the village where I was born. Hear the word, — "He is risen, he is not here;" and look there where they are.

I do not mean by all this that the spot where the body is laid shall be indifferent to us. We should make it beautiful. I would also have simple flowers in and about the casket, if the body is to be buried. I speak against only excess and extravagance in this matter. I would have people look forward and upward instead of back and down.

There is another thing that the belief in the empty tomb ought to do for us; and that is, take away from us forever the fear of being separated from those we love. We are separated from friends here for a little

while; and we do not mourn over it unduly. Some one we love makes a tour of the world, and is gone a year. We do not put on mourning. They go to Europe, they go to Southern California, they go to Japan, or they are separated by the exigencies of business, — one friend lives in one city, and another in another. We do not break our hearts over it. If we believed, if we knew, that those we call dead were alive, and separated from us for how long nobody knows, — a month, a year, ten years, twenty perhaps, but only for a little while, — and if we knew they were only in another room of God's great house, remembering us, loving us, waiting for us, all this delusion that love can ever be bereft would pass away.

Whittier says, —

“Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress trees,  
Who hopeless lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play, —  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,  
That life is ever lord of death,  
And love can never lose its own.”

That is the great truth I believe in.  
God has given us love, the sacrest, dear-



est thing in all the world, that which alone makes heaven, that which can turn the earth of pain and labor and weariness into heaven; and the fact that he has given us this is — to my mind — a hint that it is ours forever. I do not believe it is possible ever to lose that which is really bound to us by the ties of the deepest and truest love.

There is one other thing. This belief in the empty tomb should take away from us the great sorrow which broods over so many hearts, — the fear of going out into the unknown alone. There are those sensitive natures that cling so tenderly to those for whom they care, that they would not be separated from them, if they could help it, even for a week. They are lonely, they are homesick, unless they can look upon the familiar face, hear the familiar voice, feel the touch of the familiar hand; and such as these, even though they believe ever so strongly in the future life, approach the journey's end with fearfulness, with the dread of being launched on that ocean all alone. That means more to them than dying, more to them, perhaps, than any other sorrow.

But Jesus is reported as saying to his disciples, in that perfectly human way, "I go to prepare a place for you; and, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself." I believe that is a universal human truth. When we come into this world, we come expected. We know nothing about it, but love is here waiting for us, making a place for us, and we are clasped in arms of tenderness and care.

So I believe that those who have gone away are not growing into tall, intellectual, spiritual angels, who have no sympathy with any commonplace thing like our human life here any longer. I believe this is an utter perversion of the whole conception of spiritual development. Those who are the highest and mightiest spiritually are the tenderest, the ones who stoop the lowest to gather in their arms the very weakest and most needy, so as to carry and comfort them.

So our friends are not growing away from us. They are not getting off into some other sphere where they will forget that they ever lived on so plebeian a place as this little planet, and forget that they were ever associ-

ated with common folk like us. They are waiting for us; they are working, thinking, planning, loving; and some of them will be there when we go over; and as we look and peer through the haze as it breaks, revealing the harbor and the hills of the Eternal City, there will be known faces, with love in their eyes, looking for us, and hands held out, and welcome which shall make us feel at home.

With this great conviction in our hearts, let us go through these lives of ours without fear, taking the accidents and the incidents only as happenings by the way, seeing the meaning of all yonder; growing old not pushed by an inevitable force from behind, counting the new gray hairs every day, and watching the wrinkles in the face, and shrinking from and dreading the time when we must confess that we are aged and feeble. Let us grow old as plants and fruits grow, — riper, richer, juicier every day, — carrying with us the accumulated experiences; getting into that land towards the sunset where the activities and feverishness of the past are somewhat abated; looking towards the declining sun not as though it was the end of everything and was going to leave us in

the dark ; looking and rejoicing in the glory as he goes down to light the other hemisphere, fixing our eyes on the stars that rise, revealing to us countless other and grander worlds; and knowing that just beyond is to be the dawning,—the dawn of a day whose sun shall no more go down.





















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